

A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES

# The Café Wall

COFFEE  
STORIES  
PEOPLE  
MOMENTS



YOMNA MOHY EL DIN

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# The Café Wall

And Other Stories

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## **Madness and the Chase**

**I think that we're all a little bit insane. Those of us who remain outside mental institutions simply hide it better.**

*Stephen King*

Sometimes, it is difficult to search within yourself; there is no easy path to try, and if one exists, it lies in a desolate city born of the illusion of dreams—where reality loses its meaning.

To be a failure means that no one will support you forever; you alone are responsible for your life. But if you succeed, many people will gather around you. Always remember: once you overcome obstacles and hardships, one day you will be proud of yourself.

Most importantly, believe in yourself and in that dream dwelling within you—the dream for which you live. Do not exist without purpose. The road is never paved, yet you can still reach what you desire through countless attempts, with determination and willpower.

Christine was feeling the usual frustration and boredom, due to the difficulty of finding work, and she wasn't the type to give up easily, but during the days of the Corona pandemic, she lost her passion, and sometimes felt like giving up. She longed to feel like someone important, and dreamed of becoming a wealthy businesswoman.

Fear haunted her whenever she thought about the unknown future. As usual, she went to church on Sunday to pray. She was a young woman in her twenties, beautiful, intelligent, strong, and ambitious. She believed she was the most beautiful face on earth, and she had great self-confidence, always smiling, and was boundlessly enthusiastic. She dreamed of achieving her goals. But she fears that her life will be wasted. She grew up in a conservative and strict family, recently graduated from business school, and now dreams of becoming a successful businesswoman in the near future.

Her father was a retired soldier in the army, and her mother was a kind-hearted housewife who never treated anyone with ill will in order to preserve people's love, especially her husband, who saw her as beautiful as his own daughter.

Christine was lying in bed when she came across a post on this site via a Facebook link. It featured job advertisements for companies that matched her academic qualifications. During this difficult period, she tried to use her free time to benefit from her experiences in the harsh life after the Corona pandemic.

Within a few days, her father agreed to her desire to work for car manufacturing companies. She was nervous when she went with her mother on the first day of training at the company to learn some techniques in the Seventh District of Nasr City at a famous company.

One day, as she boarded the bus to return home, she kept imagining her future in the coming days, weeks, and months. She felt anxious and tense, and then, for the first time, she felt sad and unhappy. She didn't know whether to continue in this difficult job or leave it, after they told her that the work was hard, not easy, without rest, and with a mixture of pressure for long periods.

On Christine's first day at the company, after meeting with the manager, he asked her about her life, career, and physical health to ensure she was capable of handling the difficult responsibility of working under such intense pressure. He also asked her where she would live, as the company would provide transportation for male and female employees via company buses if she were to join the company.

She was feeling distressed and tired of the daily routine due to the long distance between her home and the company's headquarters, in addition to her dream of a senior position and her lack of confidence in achieving it. She felt distressed after continuing to go to the factory for five days with her mother, who suffered from fatigue and pain and did not want to leave her alone despite her being twenty years old, as she still worried about her daughter.

Christine hated her life, which was filled with pain, misery, and cruelty. She entered the training hall alongside the new trainees. The place was cramped. An old-looking man wearing glasses sat on the chair next to Christine and began asking provocative, repetitive questions to the trainer, who was explaining training strategies, work specifications, and rest hours.

After the trainer left and let the trainees talk and behave as they pleased, that old-looking man suddenly stood up, and he kept moving and pacing around the place, behaving in a strange and annoying manner, which made the young workers annoyed by his presence and his strange behavior during waiting times.

Christine was disturbed and fed up with the behavior of this eccentric person, who seemed to be crazy with his unnatural actions. Three days after the training, the same person came and tried to sit next to her. Her face turned pale with fear and she averted her eyes. She felt anxious, but she pretended to be steadfast and strong despite her fear of him due to his strange appearance.

She put her bag on the chair next to him so that he would not sit next to her. She was annoyed with him and could not stand his presence at all because he was nosy in his constant and provocative questions about her. When he sat in front of her, her face turned red with anger and she seemed annoyed that he was sitting in front of her.

He then asked her for her number so he could contact her via WhatsApp, but she refused. Her annoyance increased when she suspected that he was spying on the papers in the coach's office in front of them without anyone noticing his actions.

The young man didn't accept her objection. He sat in front of her, looking at her with great curiosity, as eccentric as a spy. Her training days were over, and Christine's mother was waiting for her in the car outside the training building to take her home.

Suddenly, this young man came and confronted her mother in front of the car window and asked her for her number. Her mother gave him the number without thinking and without Christine even knowing who she was. Christine found the young man talking after she got into the car. On the way home, her mother looked at her angrily and asked her daughter,

- Why are you doing that? Isn't That right? Didn't he say anything to you? And why does he want you to talk to him, Mom?

Her mother, who seemed distracted by the driving and looked at the road, said

- But he wants my number to contact you to help you with company news, and I basically agreed after I gave him my number.

Christine was angered by her mother's behavior, and responded angrily after she asked her:

- Why are you doing that? How could you let him take your number without you knowing it? He's weird and crazy!

She found her daughter right about the number, but her mother was hesitant and didn't know how to answer this question.

Christine then asked her:

- What's his name, Mom?

Her mother said after learning the name of the young man who had spoken to her moments before:

- His name is Andrew Monroe.

She learned the name of the young man who had never stopped insisting on her. It was a young man who had suffered a stroke after birth, which had left him with a mental and intellectual disability. He was a normal, conventional young man in his thirties, and he still loved to snoop around on all the girls. He deceived several Christian girls, and he is not kind-hearted, but a devil in human form, which made everyone hate him and stay away from him because of his ugly face. He grew up in a working-class neighborhood in Shubra in a Christian family, and he never stopped being arrogant and haughty in front of people. He loved to spy on those around him, and did not accept objection or rejection. Rather, he became frightening when everyone ignored him. He had a bad reputation, and people made fun of him when he intruded on people. He was

unemployed and a failure. ...and no one supports or encourages him. He is a heavy burden on those around him. He is not a normal human being, but rather a mentally and psychologically ill person who still hides secrets and pretends to be skillful in a frightening way, as if he knows everything, so he does not appear ignorant.

But he's extremely weak and hates everyone around him, which makes everyone dismiss him and ignore him. One day, he finds Christine's files on the trainer's desk in the training hall. He snoops through them to get her phone number, and he's glad he got her number so easily without anyone noticing.

The next day, an agreement was reached between Al-Sahrawi Hospital and Leoni to transfer the male and female trainees after they had completed the required paperwork regarding their physical and mental health as a prerequisite for employment. Trainees must undergo an x-ray before traveling and board the same buses, after the young men and women have gathered on the bus.

But Christine's mother refused, saying she would take her daughter and follow the bus to the hospital. Suddenly, she lost track of the bus in the blink of an eye due to the traffic jam, so she called Christine's colleague, Basma, to ask her for the hospital's address after she parked her car next to the garage.

But she let her daughter act inside the clinic under the supervision of her colleague. After the x-ray was over, the interns left the clinic. At that moment, Andrew Monroe appeared and told Christine—after finding her outside—that he had called her mother to check on her daughter. Suddenly, Christine became furious and shouted at him after exposing him to everyone, saying,

- Don't ever interfere in my life. What's it to you? You have nothing to do with me, you crazy person!

At that moment, her calmness brought Christine to this gentle place towards Andrew, who seemed silent and did not understand Christine's reason, and did nothing, which deceived Christine in her favor because of this act of kindness that haunted her in time. After Christine left the hospital, she waited in a high place to take the bus on her way

After boarding, she sat down, furious at the ridiculous situation that had caused her to lose her composure. She opened her phone and found an unread WhatsApp message. Then she received a call from an unknown number, but she was surprised to discover that this number belonged to the young man, Andrew, whom she had spoken to a short while earlier. While she was still on her way home, she asked herself: How did Andrew know her number without her giving it to him? She remained absent-minded, feeling anxious, scared, and terrified because of Andrew, and she couldn't understand why he insisted on calling her.

After returning home, Christine spoke to her mother immediately after telling her what had happened that day.

Christine said:

- Andrew took my number from you while you were sitting in the car that day, Mom?

Her mother replied,

- No, I didn't give him your number. I gave him my number, not yours at all, believe me.

Christine said,

- Andrew has been following me and hounding me for the past few weeks, but I don't understand why he wants me. He's not normal at all.

Her mother, who isn't good at responding, didn't respond. She seemed hesitant, accustomed to not helping resolve or discuss situations. So she said

- This is normal. There's nothing strange. He just wants to help you with this job.

Christine replied:

- This isn't normal. It's strange and scary, but I still want to protect myself from this crazy person.

Her mother, terrified, replied that she refused to intervene for the safety of Andrew and her daughter. Christine became angry because she hadn't found a solution to this frightening problem after Andrew entered her life, which made her feel afraid and anxious. She doesn't know how to deal with crazy people, and she had previously met bad people and immediately distanced herself from them.

Now she was tired of dealing with people in this world. The next day, the last day of training, Christine asked the male and female workers - after complaining to them about Andrew - if anyone had given Andrew her number without her knowledge. But she didn't find anyone who had given him the number at all. After checking with them, she decided to ask Andrew directly via messaging, so she sent him a message on WhatsApp.

Christine wrote:

- How did you get my number? Please, you must tell me, please, Andrew.

Andrew replied:

- You gave me your number yourself that day.

Christine replied:

- No, I didn't give you my number at all, but you got it from someone else, didn't you?

Andrew didn't reply and ignored her message as if he were toying with it. He continued to haunt Christine after training and called her mother to wish her happy holidays. Christine nearly lost her mind and began to think about this matter a lot, so she went back in her memory to connect the events.

I remembered that Andrew was standing there that day looking for something and found Christine's number written on a piece of paper above the desk in front of the male and female workers without anyone noticing what he was doing at the time.

Christine was sitting in the training place with the male and female workers when she saw Andrew spying on her files, but he always denied that he got her number by spying on those files, and she almost fell into his trap if it weren't for his clear lie, as she knew that Andrew got her number without anyone knowing since she saw him spying on her files and he did not stop following her for long weeks

She tried to warn him many times, but failed every time because of Andrew's stubbornness. He ignored her and never carried out her words. No one knows why Andrew insisted on pursuing Christine.

After confirming his lie, she tried to get him to delete her mother's number because he kept asking about her. Andrew agreed, but on the condition that he keep her daughter's number.

Christine was angry, because she had suffered before from the presence of crazy and bad people, and she had never seen normal people in her Egyptian life, but Andrew was not a normal person, rather he was weak and had a small mind, and when the arrangements were made between the male and female workers to transport them to their homes every day according to their places of residence, on different roads and distances, whether near or far.

Andrew lived far away from Christine, but he wanted to ride the bus with her. He looked at Christine, who stood there, scared, thinking he was pointing at her in front of the drivers who had gathered around him. They forced him to board a bus assigned to him without Christine.

Christine felt relieved to be on a different bus with the other male and female workers. She hadn't even started work at the workshop yet. She needed a leave of absence due to other concerns, but her mother and her supervisor had reached an agreement to allow her to take the leave. Andrew began working at the workshop, and Christine hadn't been seen since she took her leave.

A few months had passed without Andrew writing to Christine since he started working at the company. Christine opened her letters via correspondence, which she hadn't opened in a long time because she had been traveling to the small village. Andrew didn't forget Christine, sending her congratulatory messages.

Christine decided to obtain his ID photo in the hope of reporting him to the police, and tried to trick him into enrolling in a computer course. Andrew actually sent him his ID photo, not realizing her evil intentions. He turned Christine, who had been calm, into a bad girl who was tired of enduring his anger.

It was never her fault that she decided to permanently remove Andrew from her life. Christine had gone through a nervous and difficult period because of him, and her life had become miserable because of his intrusion. She had sent him insulting messages at all hours via text message, without him understanding her messages, repeatedly and non-stop for two days.

Andrew told her about her origins because she helped him enroll in a computer course. Inside her Giza home, a disgruntled family member saw messages between her and Christine, full of insults. Andrew blocked her for the first time and no longer attended projects. Christine began to feel as if she was shedding a large amount of heavy clutter.

Christine gradually improved after this crazy person left her life. She felt happy and fulfilled when she pursued a career in business administration, became successful in her work, and rose to the position of CEO. She never regretted what she had done to him.

Within a few days, Andrew was doing everything, going crazy, screaming terrifyingly every day after he abandoned her, and getting distracted from his work, until his family forced him to visit a psychiatrist and he moved from home to a mental health facility for weeks and months, after he abused drugs and took antidepressants, until he died in a mental hospital.

## The Psychopath

**Depression is the most hateful experience I have ever had. It's the inability to imagine feeling happy again, and also the complete absence of hope. It's the feeling of death. It's completely different from feeling sad.**

**- Dostoyevsky**

You should never delve into your delusions that you're in reality, because the vast universe lies outside your real world, and then you'll discover wonderful things and do what you've always wanted to do. Laila, 18, has been watching TV since she was a little girl.

That innocent, beautiful, mischievous girl, with blue eyes and long hair, who wore bright colors as a child and a young girl, was left alone among her family throughout her childhood. Her fake mother came after she finished her housework. She found Laila sitting on the floor in front of the TV, laughing and concentrating on cartoons, Indian, foreign, and Turkish films, and translated series. She shouted angrily after looking at her:

- You should never delve into your fantasies, because you find yourself in real reality, where the vast universe lies outside your real world, and then you discover wonderful things and do what you have always dreamed of doing. It is enough, my dear, that you sit up since early morning. Go to your room and sleep, because you will start going to school tomorrow at eight in the morning.

Laila was upset because she hated studying. She was forced to go to boarding school by her parents, and many days she would sleep there during the short weekends. Therefore, she no longer liked going to school because of her boring days. The next morning, her mother was standing in front of her in the room. Laila, whose features appeared sullen and she held the server with her hands, said:

- I don't like school, I was bored, but I did nothing but be quiet and silent all day by myself.

She was raised on television after growing up in an orphanage. As a lonely, isolated child, she never had any friends, becoming stubborn and introverted. However, she learned things from films and TV series, which deepened her love for acting. Her mother didn't know how to help her protect herself from the harmful effects of television. She always left her daughter alone in front of the TV. Laila got to know distinct characters while watching cartoons, until, as she grew older, she realized for the first time that she had no friends.

She had nothing but solitude and entertainment games until she reached middle school, where she would frequently watch Indian Movies and Turkish series with subtitles after returning from school. Over time, she learned from cartoons and became attached to one of the popular characters from her childhood, such as Sesame Street, with her pure heart. She never stopped watching television, which corrupted her mind over time. Her dreams became intertwined with the real scenes from her life in a movie in her old memories, with different details. She was unable to distinguish between the real events and the imaginary ones in her mind at all. She moved away from her family to escape harsh reality into a fantasy world, like watching Spacetoon.

As a teenager, Laila tried to stay away from television because she had poor eyesight and wanted to wear nice-looking glasses. She deliberately moved closer to the big screen, then to her smartphone and television via YouTube, as she loved watching new movies.

She didn't stop holding her phone for a long time, and her attempts to stay away from television, which had corrupted her brain from childhood to the present, failed. She never gave up that bad habit, and she became sad and angry about her attachment to movies and TV series. She grew tired of the daily routine and tried to make the most of her time.

She finds nothing to do to fill her free time except sit by the window every night, which makes her feel calm and silent without anyone from her simple family. She loves solitude and silence, and sometimes she cuts off her relationship with everyone and becomes depressed, so she returns to watching movies on Spacetoon for days, weeks, and months.

She remained obsessed with these Turkish, Indian, foreign, Japanese, and Korean films until she reached the stage of addiction and obsession with television. She grew up on all the stories of cartoon characters in an innocent and childlike manner, as she loved and memorized the characters of cartoon films during her childhood.

She was lost in her wild imagination. Then her mother entered the living room, looked at her angrily, and said:

- You need to stop sitting in front of the TV. I'm tired of your constant stubbornness and anger. Please, my daughter, stop obsessing over the TV.

Laila felt sad because her mother had never understood her, that she was never her friend, and that she hadn't realized that all she had to do was sit around and spend so much of her free time, that she was suffocating and bored. She looked at her mother, who had put her arms around her waist, and said:

- I have nothing, and I don't know how to use my free time. I can no longer stand staying at home because you refuse to let me go out alone, and I have no friends at all.

Her mother seemed hesitant and confused, then left her alone to go to work. The little girl was attached to her fake mother, afraid of the outside world. Her mother, who deliberately left her because she was busy with her teaching job, was sad and withdrawn, deprived of love and affection, and found no one who understood her. Everyone prevented her from going out into the outside world, so Laila lived inside a prison like a bird that cannot be freed from its cage because of her fake mother.

She developed a mental illness after being imprisoned, and she never learned to depend on herself. She found herself alone among the homes of different families without an outside door for a few months.

Every time, she would escape from the harsh reality in which she found no one who cared for her or loved her. She was like a prisoner screaming at the top of her lungs from within sometimes. Everyone had left her alone, so she became lonely, lacking attention and love, and she was never in harmony with others outside.

Even with her mother, who had found her as an infant in an orphanage, she was so withdrawn that she couldn't go anywhere alone. A few days later, wanting to escape reality, she entered the abandoned mansion, then closed her eyes and sank into a deep sleep.

She woke up to find herself in a dark place, transformed from a normal human being into a cartoon character on a large screen. The screen wasn't what she saw; she saw people sitting in the hall, crying over her disappearance and searching for her in the outside world. She felt sad in that turbulent situation.

She was still stuck in recorded movies behind animated characters on Spacetoon, looking for a way out from an old TV inside the abandoned palace after feeling scared in an unreal world that took her to places around the planet without her will, as if she was standing in front of an exciting screen.

She sat down and tried to ask herself several times if she was okay since leaving the harsh reality that had abandoned her after entering its unknown world. She was searching for an answer to why she had entered the abandoned palace, but she couldn't find one. She discovered that she had delved into an old, abandoned place, and watched those animated characters moving around her, exchanging talk and laughter behind the screens, until she felt scared.

After finding those live, not imaginary, characters that appeared on Spacetoon TV inside the abandoned place, she got used to talking to the animated characters who spoke loudly. The little girl, who no longer spoke to anyone, was in the midst of silence, unaware of the things around her.

Every night, she would escape the problem of loneliness, without knowing her real family, who were constantly arguing and fighting, to her secret place. She would cry over her difficult memories, and sit on the floor of this place on a cold night.

She looked up at the bright, circular moon, its light reflecting off the dark, fragrant ground and the soft breeze. She felt warmth and tenderness in her intense solitude, and closed her eyes to dive into the depths of her dreamy sea. In the future, she was confident, as if she could touch the moon with her fingers.

Suddenly, she felt voices in her mind echoing inside her for hours, and the pain in her mind was unbearable until she felt dizzy. Since she couldn't speak due to staying up late and lack of sleep, she felt that time wasn't waiting for her, but she did nothing but wait. She learned patience thanks to this place, and sometimes she tried to search for herself, her happiness and her laughter.

She was sitting in this secret place that no one else knew about. She had fled from everything, but she hadn't escaped the grief over her life and soul. She found no way but to move forward, get lost, and then run to the unknown path, to the deserted place.

She was grieving and cursing herself for beating herself up sometimes every night. She almost reached the dark place, and confessed to herself that she had discovered everything in the moment of awakening from the illusion and awareness in that difficult moment.

She realized that fate was testing her to see if she would survive on her own, without anyone's help, because she was responsible for her life. She became that weak, sad person who had no feelings, no soul, no happiness, no pain, no feelings, no joy, no strength, no hope. No one cared about her, no one felt for her, because she was lost in her dreams and desires.

She ran in her dreams without getting out of the tunnel, trying to wake up from her sleep, still searching for the purpose of her existence in this world, for her mind and heart every day. But she is always in conflict with herself, and finds no one to guide her to the right path.

Until she found the big shining door from the big screen, she left the deserted palace and arrived at the orphanage. She left her fantasy world and went into reality, and hugged her unreal mother after returning from the big screen. She no longer regretted the lateness of this simple and beautiful life after she abandoned her fantasy world in the deserted palace

She worked hard at boarding school until she graduated from high school on her own. At that point, she abandoned the old habit that had started in her during childhood and adolescence, until she reached the age of twenty-four.

As the years passed, a mysterious, unknown figure appeared. She got to know names several times until she never saw her real names. When she reached young adulthood, she became psychologically disturbed and remained alone without friends, self-sufficient, and never felt completely alone, believing that no one loved her or connected to a part of her. She no longer loved life as she used to, and she did not know who she was, so her psychological state worsened and she did not find anyone to help her on the path.

She opened her primary Facebook account for the first time after the spread of technology in Egyptian society following the January 25 Revolution, which began to manifest itself on the site. She added numerous relatives and friends, created a group in the name of her old school, and posted numerous posts and photos.

She tried to open her old page but forgot her password and couldn't get it back, so she created a new page with a pseudonym, without revealing her real name. During that difficult period, she decided to treat herself and continued searching for a psychologist willing to help her treat her mental illness. Then she wrote a question in her posts as follows:

***In the case of an 18-year-old girl suffering from a mental disorder and depression, she is an introvert living in isolation, having cut off contact with everyone throughout her life since her miserable childhood, and has endured what no human being should be able to bear. She suffers from insomnia and has considered suicide since she was 16. Perhaps someone will help her find a therapist to treat her.***

Someone sent her the number of a psychologist on her fake page, and she contacted Dr. Jihan Ahmed, a physician who had been working at a university hospital for five years. Jihan is intelligent, brilliant, and strong-willed. She dreamed of becoming a psychologist since she was a child and had been deeply involved in the study of psychiatry since graduating from the Faculty of Arts at Ain Shams University.

She then earned her master's and doctorate degrees. The psychiatrist agreed to treat her at her remote home for free after the unknown girl told her about her past life and problems without knowing the girl's real name. The psychiatrist came to the unknown girl's home hoping to help her deal with her shock and grief, given her experience in coping with this difficult life.

When she wrote about the unknown girl, the girl explained her difficult circumstances and everything about her past life up until now, after she learned that the girl's name was Nada Muhammad, the same girl who had posted the post that day. The doctor continued to help her and visit her several times.

Despite this, Nada did not feel comfortable or at peace, because she had been subjected to the greatest shock due to the problem of her mother and her fake father who had traveled outside the city after marrying another woman. Perhaps she missed her close father who had let her down.

He stopped checking on her and abandoned her, so her life turned upside down and she lost everything in the blink of an eye. She distanced herself from them and failed in her life because of her psychological state. She could no longer bear to live in that harsh life, so she started opening her phone to browse social media sites for twenty-four hours a day.

She could no longer bear to live in that harsh reality. She discovered the truth of life, suffered betrayal and treachery, and had doors closed in her face. However, she no longer cared about her family since becoming attached to this device, and she no longer controlled her mind due to her immaturity and lack of life experience.

She began to hate social media and felt increasingly alone amid her parents' neglect, lack of understanding, and lack of harmony. She was overcome by feelings of regret and unhappiness, believing she didn't deserve to live with the estranged family. Suicidal thoughts gripped her, and she attempted suicide several times but failed. She no longer saw a reason for her existence in the outside world.

One night, she went to an apartment building and went up to the roof. She started crying about everything, stood on the roof railing and closed her eyes. It was a rainy night and the sky was dark with thunder and lightning. She tried to jump and suddenly, an unknown young man came and saw her standing on the roof railing. He tried to save her, but she did not die thanks to this honorable young man who looked at her and said:

- Don't commit suicide. There are wonderful things in this life. You may become great, strong, and an inspiring heroine in the future. Stop being pessimistic and trust me. There is a new life after the end of the old life. As the saying goes, we must start a new page. Remember that there is always a new opportunity.

She didn't heed the young gentleman's advice, so she went downstairs and returned home in that suspicious state. A few days later, she saw his picture in a newspaper. It turned out he was a famous artist, and she read the news of his death in a car accident. She was shocked at the time, as it had never occurred to her that this noble young man, who had saved her from death and given her a chance at life, had met his death.

She went to the psychiatric clinic after making an appointment. Dr. Jihan smiled when the psychiatric patient appeared before her and said to her:

- I'm happy to have you with me. This means that hope never ends, but rather, there is a new life full of blank pages. Stop being pessimistic. You can change your old life and transform it into a new one full of energy, determination, and dreams. I would like to help you improve your new life, and you must tell me about your childhood up until the present stage in your life.

The patient seemed nervous and confused, unsure of what to tell the psychiatrist. She looked down and bowed her head, saying,

- I don't know how you can do this, but I hope it happens one day. I need a miracle to change my life forever. I don't know where to begin with my story.

The doctor understood her position, allowed her to take a break, and advised her to lie down on the chaise longue and relax. The doctor said,

- It's important that you tell me everything about your past life.

After taking a deep breath and looking up at the ceiling, the patient said,

- It's not easy for me to remember everything about my difficult life, full of harsh events and a painful childhood. Well, I'll try to tell you something to at least feel comfortable, and I'll need a little time to remember well when I return to my conflicting thoughts and feelings.

The doctor said to her after smiling:

- There's nothing wrong with that, but always remember that there is a way within you, don't look in the wrong place. You must reevaluate your life from the past to the present, you deserve to think well, and you must overcome the huge wall to achieve your dreams and reach your destined place, where you can write your destiny. You must follow your heart and Mind, they will lead you to the right path. There is no miracle, but with your hands closed doors will be opened.

The patient told the psychiatrist in a state of fear and confusion:

- I suffered from severe depression since I was accused of madness because my thoughts were strange and had crossed the boundaries into imagination, but perhaps I lost the ability to face the harsh reality. I changed after I fell into my own world that resembled me, and I escaped from the abandoned palace in my childhood stage after I developed schizophrenia. I went through a nervous breakdown and psychologically became disturbed because of overthinking what I had gone through, but I am still afflicted with obsessive-compulsive disorder. I became fond of cleaning and ordering, and I was shocked to suffer from physical and mental illnesses, and I discovered that I had become bipolar in this difficult way.

The psychiatrist wrote in her diary after listening to the patient's conversation. The sessions continued for weeks and months. Her fake family never noticed what had happened to her, and she went through it alone without receiving sufficient attention. Then the patient's condition improved after her miserable life was transformed into a beautiful one.

She learned how to trust herself and fight alone. After a few months, Nada became strong and mature, then mysteriously disappeared after deactivating her fake account and stopping visiting Dr. Jihan. Dr. Jihan worried about her and was unable to contact her.

She decided to go to her home to check on her, but found the house locked for a long time and no one there. At the same time, Nada had traveled with her family, who had raised her in the orphanage, to move from their old home to a new one. During that time, she created a new fake Facebook page under the pseudonym ***Ishrakat Muhammad***, and no one but her knew her real name.

One day, after work, Dr. Jihan sat in the hospital dining room when the mentally ill patient appeared, walked over, and sat down in front of her. The mentally ill patient said, frowning, and looked at Jihan:

- I want to tell you everything. I decided to write about the abandoned palace from my childhood, and I wrote my story about the abandoned palace that was never real, but a product of my imagination, because I wanted to get the attention of my imaginary family. I was creating problems to take care of them, and the abandoned palace does not exist in reality, because I wrote my story from my imagination. I sent you the wrong address since I moved to a new house, and I told you the story of the abandoned palace.

She continued, looking at me with a sly smile:

- Do you know why my parents left me in the orphanage when I was little? Because they became upset by my illness, a lifelong hole in my heart that had no cure. They left me in the orphanage because they were extremely poor.

Jihan looked surprised and said to her,

- You've been through more than anyone could bear, and you didn't deserve such stubbornness and cruelty because you're kind-hearted. I'm sorry you're suffering all the time, but you chose to be the heroine of your story. Don't indulge your emotions now that they've become exhausting.

Jihan continued her words after breathing a sigh of relief:

- I felt that you were special and exceptional among the other girls, and that you would be strong and ambitious. I will support and help you, and the fact that you confessed the truth to me means that you are brave and have a very strong conscience. You shouldn't bear everything alone.

Jihan smiled after looking at the patient, who seemed distressed:

- Always remember that you will be strong and inspired without anyone to support you, and that you will continue on your path and never give up, because I am with you at all times. Always remember that you will be proud of yourself, and I will support you, and we will be patient together until we die.

The patient said after looking at her:

- Perhaps I told you about the young man who saved me from death on the rooftop in our sessions months ago, but he did not die. I could not write his name because I do not know it, but I created the hero in my mind and wrote about my story with him to make my story seem perfect. The nanny whom I loved all the time, because she took care of me and never left me out of fear of my loneliness, I became attached to her and she became like my real mother who tried to help me after I got rid of my addiction to television and the internet. Then I grew up in different homes several times until I settled in my own apartment at the age of eighteen after leaving the orphanage. But my unreal family was not real; I invented their characters so that I would become pitiful. I was tired of seeing them look at me with pity in front of the people around me in the harsh society.

Laila Ashraf, who changed her name several times, suffered from mental health conditions, including bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, since growing up on the streets after middle school. She suffered from severe depression and was a quiet, lonely child, having never had any friends. Originally an orphan, her parents left her in an orphanage due to their extreme poverty, and she was raised in the homes of various families. Since she was struck by a TV addiction obsession, she left the orphanage at the age of eighteen, then lost her real identity and created the character of Nada, borrowing the name of her schoolmate.

Later, she created a new page under the Name *Ashrakat*. She was afraid of society and the people around her who hated her. Everyone who knew about her illness distanced themselves from her and abandoned her, forcing her to meet new people because she didn't want to be alone, so she escaped her painful past. Laila said, looking at Jihan, who was frozen in place:

- My real name is Layla Ashraf. I search for my story and myself without knowing my own identity, and I travel to different places. I did not have a single family since I grew up on the streets, and I slept on the ground constantly until I worked in several different jobs until I settled in my own apartment and became self-reliant. But I wrote about an unreal family, an abandoned palace, and a gallant young man, and none of them were real. I chose to create their characters, then I traveled to another city and disappeared because I could not trust you, and afterwards I moved to my own apartment.

Laila continued her words after looking at Jihan, who appeared to be frowning at her:

- I will end my life to rid myself of my problems. They are like a curse surrounding me, but I cannot rid myself of them because I do not know how to describe what we do not want to feel. Life is complicated enough.

Then she got up from the chair in pain, as she could not bear her life since the hardships and difficulties had accumulated, and walked towards the elevator, then turned back and got into the escalator. She stood on the rooftop railing, while Jihan, shocked by her words and true confessions, ran quickly to the stairs after Laila took the elevator. Jihan then stood on the rooftop after begging her, because she couldn't bear to see her at that moment, and she never imagined that she would face a suicide attempt.

She tried to hold her, but Laila's foot slipped, and before she fell, she opened her arms after looking up at the dark sky, and apologized to herself for not being able to find solutions to her own problems that never ended. Laila fell, and her soul left her body, she was gone and would never return to this life. Jihan collapsed because she was unable to save her, as everything happened in a single moment.

## Hatred and Revenge

*You don't hate me, you hate the image you've created of me, and that image isn't me, it's you!*

**- Adonis**

Shorouk Ayman lived in the Matariya neighborhood, growing up in a well-off family living in a working-class area full of thugs. Shorouk was attached to her younger sister, Reem, who tried to imitate her in everything, even changing her ordinary personality to an arrogant and conceited one that did not suit her young age, as she was the closest friend to her older sister. As for their mother, the housewife, she was weak-willed and sometimes cowardly, and had no authority, until she gave in to their stubbornness.

When Shorouk was a public school student, she wasn't always kind or gentle; her social needs constantly changed due to her outward appearance. She dreamed of going to school to have fun and enjoy herself with her classmates, but for some reason, she was talkative, arrogant, and conceited, loving to show off to everyone.

Over time, a girl named Kholoud began to be treated badly. Kholoud was an obedient, quiet, and introverted student. She went to school in the morning and returned home, suffering from a boring daily routine. However, she was constantly jealous of Shorouk Ayman because everyone loved her. In contrast, Kholoud was overwhelmed with feelings of sadness for herself, and often asked herself: Why don't they love me and talk to me?

She was like the invisible girl among the students. Because of this, she lived in constant depression, as she had no friends, and everyone made fun of her. As a result, she began to hate Shorouk, distanced herself from her, and no longer wanted to see her. Shorouk took advantage of everyone after she gained popularity at school, to the point that they started talking about her behind her back because of her hanging out with boys outside of school without her father's knowledge.

She also interacted with young people through social media during her teenage years and up until the present time. However, no one knew the reason behind Shorouk Ayman's fame and her arrogant, vagrant, and haughty personality.

Inside the classroom, Kholoud was sitting in the back seat. Some students gathered around her, and one of them asked her with a curious, scrutinizing look:

- Why do you always sit alone? What happened to you?

At that moment, Shorouk was standing and talking with her classmates. She noticed the conversation and interrupted them indifferently before Kholoud responded, saying:

- She's been like this since the beginning. Leave her alone. She never listens to anyone.

Shorouk's words made Kholoud appear weak in front of everyone, making her feel more vulnerable and humiliated than ever. Kholoud continued to prefer solitude and extreme introversion, which negatively impacted her life and her psychological and mental health.

The students kept away from her, and Kholoud wasn't the only one who was mocked and bullied by Shorouk Ayman, but she was different from the other girls. She was always quiet, feeling helpless, unable to defend her rights in front of them after they had belittled and mocked her. She didn't understand why Shorouk hated her, so one day she asked her while looking at her with resentment:

- Why don't you like me? Did I do something to make you hate me, Shorouk?

Shorouk hesitated, became confused, and turned her face away. She didn't like Kholoud because of her weak and boring personality, in her view. Then Kholoud continued after sighing sadly:

- I know you've never considered me your friend, even though we've never had any problems. So why do you do things that make me feel humiliated and bullied? And why did you interfere in a conversation you had no right to respond to? I always feel sorry for you, because you're neither beautiful nor intelligent, and you have flaws that no one can stand, as the students said. I hate you because you're selfish and stupid, aren't you?

Shorouk responded indifferently:

- No, you misjudged me. I intervened because I knew you wouldn't be able to respond to them because you're shy.

Kholoud laughed at her response and said, after smiling slyly:

- My God, you look so miserable! I know how much you suffer from the rumors being spread behind your back.

Shorouk replied:

- Really? Why do you stay away from everyone and sit alone? Why do you do that?

Kholoud shouted angrily at her:

- I'm so tired of everything that I've come to hate them! They've made me feel this hate. They talk behind my back, and you do the same! I can't differentiate between good and bad anymore. I can't stand it anymore. I've even pretended

to be stupid and ignorant. They think they know everything about me, but in reality, they're stupid, and so are you!

Then Kholoud smiled weakly and said:

- Oh my God, you never understand me! I know their actions, I've seen their behavior, I've read their looks. They judge my outward appearance and pretend not to understand. They don't have the courage to confront me!

Shorouk left her alone after she went to visit her friends outside of school. Shorouk was boastful, cold, and loved attracting attention to the point that she committed bad deeds without her parents' knowledge. She neglected her studies, as usual, and tried to appear perfect, pretending to be something she wasn't, but she failed because of her exaggerated style. She had relationships with young men simply for fun and pleasure, because she wanted to feel desired. She needed attention. She was jealous of Kholoud because of her kind personality, because she was loved by everyone and always smiling.

But Kholoud can't go out with her friends outside of school because her mother keeps her locked up at home all the time, not allowing her to do what she wants or go out with her friends, unlike Shorouk, who's used to hanging around. Kholoud feels sad, hurt, and miserable, which makes her hate her life. She doesn't know how to go anywhere, far or near, on her own, because of her mother who always accompanies her wherever she goes and never lets her act freely.

Her mother used to lock her in her room alone, without letting her see the outside world. Kholoud remained locked in the house for many years, half her life, and she always regretted wasting her time not doing what she loved. She often cried and wasted her time, and inside she was filled with regret, disappointment, and sadness. She hated to feel inadequate and empty in her life, and her psychological state had become distorted.

She became like someone fighting an internal conflict between her mind and herself, suffering from turmoil, and feeling that life is not at all fair to her.

She was like a heavy stone on the lives of those around her. She might die alone, so she sat beside everyone, quiet and silent, suffering from fatigue and a lack of happiness and joy. With each passing day, her loneliness increased, and she began to hate Shorouk intensely and bear a grudge against her. Kholoud, the good girl, turned into an evil girl after learning a harsh lesson, and she decided to take advantage of Shorouk to take revenge on her.

The next morning, Kholoud sat in the car that was taking her to school as usual. She saw Shorouk Ayman with her close friend Rowan inside the zoo, after she had sneaked out without anyone knowing. After school ended at noon, Kholoud returned home and told her mother what had happened early in the morning. Looking at her mother who was busy cooking, Kholoud said:

- I was sitting in a taxi on my way to school, and I saw Shorouk Ayman with her best friend after she ran away from school. You must tell Teacher Faten about the sneaking out and running away from school!

Shorouk's mother called teacher Faten and told her what her daughter had said. In turn, teacher Faten informed the school principal about the student who had sneaked out the day before. The principal was furious at Shorouq's inappropriate behavior, as Kholoud didn't want to lose her rights because of what Shorouq had done in front of her, as usual. Kholoud took advantage of her mother to take revenge on Shorouk as punishment for sneaking out and loitering, unlike what she herself was suffering.

The next morning, the principal summoned Shorouk and began reprimanding and warning her. He then gave her one last chance, warning her not to do it again. But Shorouk ignored the principal's orders. A rumor spread about Shorouk's punishment at school, and her reputation worsened after she appeared naked in an indecent video. As the video and her immoral scandals spread, everyone began to hate her and distance themselves from her.

Shorouk moved to her new school on the first day of school for fun and entertainment. She left her old school because she didn't care about studying at all and was busy with her relationships with the boys who hung around all the time without anyone knowing. However, on the first day of the first semester of the first year of secondary school, Kholoud began to feel comfortable when she stayed in her old school after completing her middle school stage.

She then completed her secondary education at the same school. Kholoud got rid of the chatty Shorouk, who was known for her ridiculous fame and who would always chatter and gossip for hours on end with old friends over the past and recent years. After Shorouk left, Kholoud began her new life at her high school.

Shorouk studied at the Higher Institute of Computer Science in Nasr City, while Kholoud studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Cairo University. Kholoud no longer remembered Shorouk, so the hurtful Shorouk left her life, bid farewell to her painful memories, and closed her painful story with Shorouk forever.

Kholoud lived her new, happy life, relying on herself as usual. She graduated from the College of Fine Arts, became successful in her field, and moved forward without looking back.

## Mistrust

*One feels betrayed and loses trust when those closest to them think ill of them; once trust is lost, it is hard to restore. Therefore, it is important to see within ourselves as we see ourselves, and we must not judge others before engaging with them from their perspective.*

*Life is deceptive, resembling what lies behind the scenes, and the truth that the eyes perceive can sometimes mislead us. A society full of traditions, principles, and customs is like an old myth; it does not matter what you see as much as it matters what it allows to control you and make you like them, believing what is said.*

*Yet, we must not allow society to influence our outward appearance or instill in us the fear of others' judgment. The truth is that we should hold on to our principles and traditions while striving to change for our own sake.*

Yasmine loves freedom and seeks her own love when she chooses the important details according to her desire in simple things and does not allow anyone to control her. She likes to make her own decisions, so she does not need to ask permission from her family if she wants to go out on an outing with friends and she cannot cross the boundaries between her and young men.

She never thought about men, and she never did forbidden things since she was a teenager. Her father refused to let her go out with her peers, whether they were girls or boys, and he used to tell her that mixing with young men was forbidden in her society.

Repeating words that seemed ridiculous to her, she ignored her father's words and found no evidence to support them at all. She liked to do whatever she wanted, as she pleased, and felt annoyed by her father, who forced her to obey his orders and never listened to her. For this reason, she always kept away from him and did not consider mingling with young men to be forbidden.

She was a smart, slim, short student, and had worn the hijab since she was in elementary school because a student had pulled her hair. She excelled in all her academic levels and was popular and sociable.

She memorized the Holy Quran over time. She became a first-year middle school student after completing her primary education. She belongs to a middle-class family. She has sisters whom she considers merely members of her life, as they have nothing in common except blood ties. Her mother is a kind-hearted housewife, and the only man in her family is her father. She wished to have a brother who would provide her with affection and security and make up for what she lacked.

One day in middle school, Yasmine seemed nervous and worried about the possibility of a difficult problem. She was standing outside the school gate after the driver was several hours late, so she kept waiting for him.

After the students left, Yasmine was left alone, except for one of the students from the same school, Ahmed, who couldn't leave her alone at that late hour. Ahmed was a dark-skinned student who wore glasses and had wavy hair, accompanied by his other friend.

Yasmine asked him in confusion

- Why are you still at school? You can leave me alone and go back home, and I'll manage it myself.

He replied,

- No, I won't leave you alone at night. You're like a sister to me, and I'm here to protect you.

Yasmine, not wanting anyone to see her with him because of her father's temperament, replied

- But the driver will be late. You can go and don't worry about me at all. I'm sure he'll be back soon.

Ahmed refused; she was like a sister to him. Yasmine felt anxious. She could have returned to her home, which was near the school, on her own, but she didn't, fearing her mother, who protected her from strangers and fearing she might get lost on the streets. Yasmine repeatedly tried to convince her mother to rely on herself

But her mother refused several times. Yasmine remained upset, relying on her driver who regularly transported her to and from school in a taxi. The driver's name was Wael, and Yasmine didn't feel comfortable with him in the car because of the creepy, suspicious looks she noticed in the rearview mirror. She complained to her father, but he ignored her complaints.

Meanwhile, the driver, Wael, called Yasmine's father, who was sitting at home, and told him that his car had broken down in the middle of the road, preventing him from picking her up. Her father decided to go to the school himself to pick her up. He got into his car, and when he arrived at the school, He started looking for his daughter Yasmine inside and outside the school, where she was standing talking with Ahmed and his other friend. Her father was angry when he saw them, thinking that his daughter was hanging out with the boys. He called her from a distance to see if she would answer, but Yasmine's phone wasn't working, so she didn't see the call.

Which made the situation even more complicated. She hadn't thought her father was there, but she finally paid attention when she saw him looking at her with extreme anger. She approached her father, who didn't say a word. She looked down and walked with him, embarrassed, expecting the worst. Her father completely ignored her, then they headed to the car, where she sat in the back seat.

Yasmine was certain her father would beat her as soon as she returned home. She looked scared and worried. She hadn't done anything wrong. She had talked to students outside of school. When they arrived home, she found her mother busy in the kitchen. She angrily asked her

- Why didn't you tell me my father was coming to my school?

Her mother replied,

- I didn't know your father would be going to school after he learned from the driver, Wael, that he hadn't come to see you because his car had broken down.

Her daughter shouted, almost exploding with anger

- Why didn't you come and pick me up? My father suspected me of something without even asking!

At the same time, her father called her, and she went to him, nervous. He looked at her angrily and asked

- Who were you talking to? And why were you doing that?

She replied

- They were my classmates, but I was just talking to them, not hanging around at all.

He said:

- No, but they are not respectful at all.

Yasmine shouted, defending herself, certain that she hadn't done anything wrong.

- But they're my classmates, and they didn't leave me alone out of concern for me. They're like my brothers. But I didn't just hang around. I was waiting for the driver and didn't do anything at all. But you were the one who misjudged me when you found me standing next to the students.

Her father shouted angrily,

- No, I'm right about the men. Don't do that again, do you understand?

Yasmine went outside and cried until her eyes became swollen. Her father had misjudged her and objected to her mingling with young men, as she was too young to know their bad behavior. Yasmine remained sad because of her father's distrust of her, and she became silent, absent-minded, and sad throughout her school years because of her father. But the strange thing is that her classmate Shurooq, from the same school, almost revealed her true nature to her father outside the school. She looked at him and changed her movements from seductive in front of the young men to respectful and shy movements. He did not realize the truth about his daughter, which was that she was skilled at lying and adept at concealment, as she was accustomed to deceiving her father. She used to hang out with young men without his knowledge, thus betraying her father's trust. Unlike Yasmine, who remained alone and isolated, her cheerful spirit turned miserable, as her classmates distanced themselves from her and left her in harsh solitude. She would return home every day, and after reconciling with her father, she would pretend to smile and laugh

She became neglectful and tired at school, in contrast to her conflicting, fake personality at home, where she was active and funny with her family. She continued to live in difficult and sad isolation at school, unwilling to talk to her classmates, and became severely depressed.

Years later, Yasmine no longer remembered the incident after graduating from her old school and saying goodbye to her bad memories. She was supposed to have spent the beautiful days of her teenage years. One day, Yasmine was sitting in the front seat next to her father, who stared intently at the road and said with a bright smile:

- I want to talk to you, my dear daughter. You are my only friend who understands me.

Yasmine scoffed at his words, smiled, and said

- No, you were never my friend. You could never understand me. I was always alone, I never had any friends, and no one ever stood up for me. You're the one who caused me to lose my friends. You ruined my social life.

Her father didn't believe her. He always took her words seriously because she was always joking around. He didn't understand the reason for his daughter's bad behavior, because he didn't have time for it due to his busy schedule.

- No, but you should talk to your friends. You're never alone. I'm your friend, aren't I?

Yasmine was upset and looked annoyed, because she knew her father better than she knew herself. He never understood her and never knew what was inside her at all. So she told him after looking at him with resentment that she did not want to remember the painful situation.

Her father brought back painful memories:

- In the past, you told me I was disrespectful when you saw me standing with my young classmates at school, didn't you, Father?

Her father was confused and continued,

- The past is over. I was afraid for you when you were young. You hadn't grown up yet, but now you're a mature young woman, and you can talk to your friends. I know your good manners, my daughter.

Yasmine frowned, realizing that it was too late and that what had been broken could not be repaired. She said to her father

- It's too late. I no longer want to talk to them. I don't love them at all. It's all over

She has matured; she has become a young woman. She has come to terms with her past, and she has adapted to the harshness of life. She can no longer tolerate the bad behavior of men, and she can no longer tolerate young women.

## **The white colleague**

In these times—when social appearance is more important than spiritual substance—what our longing for change has become is actually the unconscious desire to control not only the shape of our bodies (according to prevailing values) but also our environment, regardless of the cost.

*Jay Finley*

Rahaf was a white-skinned child who came holding her mother's hand while Yasmine stood in front of the morning assembly with the young elementary school students. She noticed the white-skinned child on the first day of the school year, and as time passed until the final years of middle school, Yasmine wasn't close to Rahaf, having met her at the same time. Rahaf, she thought, was attached to Yasmine. No one knew why Rahaf had such white skin; everyone was afraid of her because of it. She was different from the other students, like a pure and innocent angel from another planet.

Rahaf, with her white smile, makes you marvel at her blue eyes. She wears glasses and appears silent most of the time. She is not just an ordinary person, but rather a pure soul and kind heart. She is distinguished by her unique white beauty.

No one noticed her presence among the students inside the school and during school activities. Yasmine was standing in front of Rahaf, laughing and making fun of her in the gym with her friends during recess, because of her different skin tone. Rahaf felt sad because of her white skin. After returning from school, she decided to tell her mother about the bullying she had been subjected to by Yasmine. Yasmine did not realize the seriousness of the bullying that Rahaf had told her mother about, thinking that the matter was over, due to her lack of life experience and her young age.

But she felt remorse after making fun of Rahaf, without knowing why she had done so. Perhaps she had made her mistake because of her young age or her inexperienced mind, but she had no idea what awaited her at all. She was selfish and only thought of herself.

The next day, Rahaf's mother came to school because of what had happened the day before. She found Yasmine, who seemed nervous upon seeing her. Rahaf hid behind her mother, afraid of her mother's angry reaction.

- Why are you doing this? Why are you laughing at her and making fun of her?

Yasmine didn't answer, but she felt scared and didn't know how to act in the situation. She couldn't say anything, so she apologized, and Rahaf's mother accepted her apology.

At the same time, Yasmine realized that she never deserved a close friend like Rahaf. This made Yasmine seem like a bad girl to Rahaf's mother, and she lost trust in her relationship with her.

As a result, Yasmine hated Rahaf and couldn't stand her presence. She distanced herself from her, and their relationship became superficial after Rahaf had treated her like a friend in class. Days passed.

In high school, Yasmine felt upset and annoyed by Rahaf, and tried to distance herself from her, but she never succeeded due to Rahaf's kindness. However, Yasmine never considered Rahaf a friend.

During that time, she decided to ignore Rahaf, and she became cold towards her. Sitting in front of her in class, she found Rahaf angry with her and shouted angrily at her:

- I sent you messages yesterday telling you I wanted you to talk to me, but you're ignoring me. Why are you doing this? What's the reason for ignoring me?
- I have nothing to do with you, and I don't want to talk to you. You will be on your own without me.

After a short while, Yasmine gave in after feeling pity for her, and allowed her to talk or communicate with Rawan for her sake. However, she couldn't tell Rahaf that she didn't want to continue their relationship, out of concern for Rahaf's delicate feelings. Rahaf wanted to go out with Yasmine

Yasmine agreed to ask her mother's permission, but Rahaf's mother refused and objected, claiming that she was busy with housework, which made Yasmine feel frustrated with her.

Yasmine promises to call Rahaf's mother to go with Rahaf to the gym, so she calls Rahaf's mother to please her, but Rahaf's mother supports her.

Yasmin tried to persuade her mother to call Rahaf's mother so that she could go with Rahaf to the gym. Her mother called Rahaf's mother to please her, but Rahaf's mother refused. Yasmin was surprised to find out that Rahaf had gone out with her mother accompanied by another friend from the same old school without her knowledge, as their friend told her about it. Yasmin felt hatred toward Rahaf's mother and thought about what had happened between them in the past. Yasmin had absolutely no fault in the fact that Rahaf became attached to her throughout their school years, for Rahaf loved Yasmin, and even now she sometimes keeps in touch with her through video calls and messages.

And on the following day, inside the large classroom, Yasmin discovered that a mutual classmate from the same old school had called Rahaf on a video call and had taken pictures of her without her knowledge. Rahaf was speaking with good intentions to her classmate during the live call. In the evening, Rahaf told Yasmin about what had happened, and Rahaf in turn told her mother after finding out from Yasmin, so her mother became worried about what the classmate had done. Suddenly, in Yasmin's mother's house, while she was busy in the kitchen, she received a call from Rahaf's mother asking about the reason behind taking pictures of her daughter with the classmate without her knowledge, and she said to her:

- Colleague Ahmed, why is he doing this? Why is he taking pictures with my daughter? Why did he take them without her knowledge, and he still has pictures of my daughter, why?

Yasmine's mother looked at her daughter holding the phone to her ear and told her in turn. Yasmine intervened after understanding the reason for the fear and anxiety, and she hadn't expected that Rahaf would tell her mother so quickly. It wasn't her fault at all; she had no idea about the relationship between Rahaf and Ahmed, nor the reason for Ahmed's actions behind her back. She wasn't close to her schoolmates; they had been mere acquaintances in her life all this time.

Yasmine told her mother,

- No, that didn't happen. Ahmed never took any pictures of her. Maybe I misjudged what I told her, and it's not my fault.

Meanwhile, Rahaf sent text messages to Yasmine's phone, but Yasmine ignored them, as she could no longer stand Rahaf and regretted what she had done to protect her from Ahmed, because he was a bad and eccentric person.

Yasmine tried to warn her to stay away from Ahmed to protect her, but the problem escalated when Rahaf was not convinced or understood at all, and continued to communicate with Ahmed all the time. Yasmine then abandoned Rahaf and no longer saw or spoke to her because she was always busy.

After a long time, Yasmine went to the Giza Theater with friends to participate in a concert there. She met Rahaf in front of the theater. She sat next to her, and Rahaf was smiling and beautiful with her friend and neighbor from the same neighborhood, who was studying with her at university.

Glancing at Yasmine, Rahaf said

- I hope you are well. I missed you a lot.

Yasmine felt uncomfortable, but she pretended to be kind to her. She didn't like Rahaf, but she was considerate of her feelings and didn't want to embarrass her. Yasmine chose to distance herself from people who didn't get along with her, given their differences in many ways and the contrast between their personalities.

Rahaf is wealthy and lives in a posh neighborhood. Her father is a construction engineer, her mother is a housewife, and her younger brother, Mohammed, has fair skin due to a genetic condition. As for Yasmine, she is poor and lives in a slum. Her father is retired, and her mother is a housewife. However, she is neither mean nor hypocritical; she tries to be honest with herself and strives to be strong on her own, unsupported by anyone, in these harsh circumstances.

After the training day ended, Yasmine stopped communicating with Rahaf after she sent them a photo of them in the theater. Moments later, she blocked her on social media. Rahaf felt sad and frustrated when she tried to contact Yasmine, but Yasmine no longer remembered her, preoccupied with her difficult circumstances.

A year later, Yasmine met Rahaf's mother by chance at the metro station. She was hesitant to greet her, as she remembered what she had done to her and backed off. A few months later, Yasmine read an interesting article on the internet about a topic she had never known before.

It's albino disease, so she discovered the reason for Rahaf's and her little brother Mohamed's skin tone, and that they both suffer from this disease. The truth came out that her mother refused to let her go to the Arab Contractors Club because of the long distance between them. Yasmine was upset with her mother, but she was surprised when she learned that Rahaf still loved her, like an angel in her kind soul. Yasmine felt ashamed and guilty towards her, and realized that she had wronged her, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

After several months, Rahaf tried sending Yasmine numerous messages, but Yasmine ignored them and didn't reply, until Rahaf stopped sending them. Yasmine discovered that Rahaf had a new profile, so she sent her photos and decided to reconnect with her. But Rahaf ignored Yasmine's messages for the first time.

Yasmine was furious and felt the worst feeling indescribable. She sent her harsh messages after swearing never to reply to her again. Rahaf saw Yasmine's anger and tried to contact her, but Yasmine completely ignored her and blocked her forever. Then she changed her number and got busy with her own life. As for Rahaf, she remained stuck in her old memories.

## Soul and Ugliness

*Those who feel inadequate and lack self-confidence make fun of others. They don't know whether their ugliness reflects their inner selves, or whether they simply have an ugly appearance hidden behind a false outer beauty.*

Zainab was sitting on a chair on her first day of school, making new friends in the spacious hall. She met Mohamed Adel, a tall, shy young man who lived in a working-class neighborhood. He grew up in a very religious family; his father had a long beard, his mother was a housewife, and his sister wore the niqab. He studied with Rowan in the same class, having met her and the group of young men and women. In the midst of the lighthearted and funny conversations, he asked her:

- Would you give me your private number so we can chat on WhatsApp?

Zainab was irritated by his annoying question. How could he ask for her number so quickly on our first date?

After smiling a fake smile, she said

- No problem. You can get my number from your colleague, Rawan.

One day, on a group trip, she traveled with friends to Port Said. It was a wonderful day that Zainab would never forget, spent on the beach with girls from the same college. She was carrying her own camera and took beautiful pictures of the place. Mohamed asked her

- Can you take a picture of me with your camera, please?

She was annoyed by Mohamed's presence, and confusion appeared on her face. And She was forced to agree after looking at him with disgust:

- Okay.

Then I photographed him on the beach. He was proudly posing, smiling, and posing in different positions from different angles, not caring about Zainab's struggles with the camera. He was preoccupied with himself and said to her after smiling:

- You can send the photos via Facebook.

Zainab agreed with some unease, a faint smile appearing on her face. She began a photoshoot that lasted for hours, and suddenly found herself in a dark place with Muhammad in a difficult situation, due to the lack of people around them, as they were alone in a remote place after sunset.

She realized she couldn't photograph him far from the mutual friends, so she ran to the girls standing there to be with them, to feel safe and secure. After the day ended, she returned home late and sent the photos via messages between her and Muhammad, due to his rush and intense desire to get the pictures.

She found no opportunity to relax because of him, so she did what Muhammad wanted, feeling upset by his actions. Muhammad seemed weak to her, like the others, and she subsequently ignored the messages he sent her. As time passed, mutual friends gathered outside the classroom. Mohammed was sitting on a chair, while Zainab stood against the wall, ignoring his presence in front of the male and female students, which made her feel embarrassed.

He said to her:

- But I sent you letters, so you would prefer me over you?

She lied to him and replied in a complicated manner:

- I was busy, and I didn't see any letters from you at all.

Muhammad realized that she didn't want to communicate with him, and Zainab ignored his presence the entire time after she entered the classroom with her friends. She could no longer stand his presence at all, and she felt hatred towards Muhammad. She didn't like men and had a phobia of them. She didn't trust them at all, and she had never loved a man. But she felt admiration for an unknown young man and loved him one-sidedly, without him knowing about her love for him. She hid her love from him and refused to be associated with anyone else forever.

As the months passed, at the birthday party of this unknown young man whom Zainab loved, who was several years older than her, and a friend of Mohamed Adel's, studying with him at the same college, there were joint gatherings in a park near the college.

Abed's birthday party was held with the help of his friends and colleagues, both boys and girls. They agreed to surprise him on his birthday without his knowledge.

Zainab learned by chance that they were preparing for the party. She wanted to go with them and bought him a small gift. She then went with them to the park, sitting alone in the wooden tent away from them. She walked across the side path to the park near the college, without her mother knowing about it. She watched the girls and boys playing and talking without her.

When Abed arrived, he was surprised to find his close friends inside the park celebrating his birthday. He was happy all the time because of their love for him. Abed was talking and laughing with them, while at the same time, Mohammed Adel was talking with a close friend of Abed's named Abdullah.

He told him a funny joke that Zainab heard and laughed. She looked ugly because of her excessive weight. This prompted Muhammad to make fun of her and say to Abdullah in a funny way:

- I saw her laughing and she looked ugly like a dog, right?

Abdullah didn't respond to his hurtful words after looking at Zainab, whose face showed signs of displeasure. Mohamed Adel looked at her and continued

- I'm sorry for the slip of the tongue.
- No, it's okay, but you're wrong and a coward, and you can never be beautiful inside. You look handsome, but inside you're ugly and spiteful, and I can't stand you at all. You're frivolous and weak-willed.

Her spirit was broken after she realized Mohamed Adel's bad manners. She didn't regret never getting close to him because he insulted her. Unable to confront him, she withdrew from the park without telling anyone about her departure, because she was being bullied...

She walked towards the house until she reached the buildings, sat on the stairs behind the building and cried until her eyes swelled with pain. For the first time, she felt unhappy with them; the harsh, hurtful words had hurt her. For the first time, she felt hurt when no one stood up for her in front of everyone.

It never occurred to her that anyone would make fun of her; her ugly appearance was not her fault at all. Zainab was a girl of average beauty who grew up in a home filled with neglect, inattention, preoccupation, and disregard. She had more beautiful sisters who took care of themselves and their beauty, and did not care about her existence, as she was not like them at all. That's why she became fat because of her love of food, and she didn't think about losing weight because her mother forced her to keep eating. She didn't know how to apply beautiful makeup, she neglected her skin, and no girl taught her how to use cosmetics or coordinate elegant outfits. She never looked like beautiful girls.

Suddenly, an unknown young man continued walking through the neighborhood, holding onto a pet collar. When the dog around his neck barked, it seemed as if nature was tormenting her, making her remember that incident much more vividly than the present moment, no doubt. The young man looked toward Zainab sitting on the stairs, but she avoided looking at him, in even greater pain.

She returned home and never spoke or communicated with Muhammad again. Every time she saw him, she completely ignored his existence. He was a coward and an ignorant person, full of flaws. He did not see inner beauty, but rather outer beauty that blinded his eyes.

One night, Zainab looked in the mirror and saw her inner beauty shining brighter and radiating from her beautiful soul. She held on to her inner beauty even more tightly, hiding her own beauty that no one else could see. She applied simple makeup and felt beautiful in her soul.

She looked in the mirror, talked to herself, and told herself that she was capable of overcoming ugliness after her soul emerged from her external flaws. She became confident, strong from within, knowing that dogs are more loyal and compassionate than merciless humans. She learned the meaning of self-love and self-confidence, and for the first time, she loved herself.

## Sarcasm in School

*Humans also tend to find society enjoyable, and within the confines of social relationships, words are often spoken—often sarcastic and self-deprecating—that take on different meanings when spoken by others.*

***Taa - Nehesi Quates***

Ahmed is a quiet, sociable, and natural student who wears a white school uniform. He is slim, smiling, and well-liked by everyone. He has Eastern features, black hair, and very dark eyes. He suffers from deafness and muteness and lives in Giza. He is skilled, talented, and creative in drawing. He used to go to school early despite living far from his school.

He had a throat condition that prevented him from speaking, and he was forever deprived of his hearing. However, he was able to communicate with his schoolmates using sign language. His attention was caught by Amira Khaled, who had a silent expression and appeared thin and simple. She was his classmate, having studied with him from elementary school through high school. She used to greet him every time she saw him.

One day, in middle school, Amira noticed that Ahmed Salah kept looking at her all day in class, and he looked away when she almost discovered his gaze on her, because he was shy, as he admired her and could not confess his admiration to her.

But she noticed that he kept looking at her without her knowing at first, and she understood that this look was one of the signs of love, because of her obsession with romantic movies. She is an expert in love languages, even though she has never been in a real relationship.

In that awkward situation, Amira was extremely nervous, confused, and bewildered, because it hadn't occurred to her that Ahmed was afraid of wanting to be with her, and that he still wanted to be with her. Then she looked toward Ahmed and his friends in the classroom, and watched their whispers to him, as they encouraged him to be with her.

She felt scared when she thought about how they knew, and she suspected that Ahmed had told them about his admiration for her, and that they had tried to make him get involved with her through their common close colleague, who was trying to bring them together and was striving to make Amira impressed by Ahmed's personality. Amira felt embarrassed because of his friend who told her about Ahmed's anxiety and fear that she might be admiring someone else. And that his love for her was one-sided, without anyone knowing her secret. If she could not agree to be in a relationship with him, then she never loved him, as she considered him nothing more than her friend and schoolmate.

She used to consider her male colleagues as brothers. She could not betray her family's trust in her, and she could not enter into a relationship without their knowledge, for fear of her reputation in the current era. Some people did not stop manipulating and exploiting the lives of girls under the pretext of creating love. Amira went down the stairs after telling her close friend about Ahmed's admiration for her. Her friend was surprised and did not believe what Amira said about him, because she did not expect Ahmed's actions.

He hesitated to admit his desire to be with her for fear of her rejection, and he was about to confess his admiration for her in front of her, had it not been for Amira saying that she could not enter into a relationship with anyone. Amira took advantage of his presence and spoke with her colleagues in one of their conversations, saying that she could not be attached to anyone and did not want to enter into a relationship with anyone.

After Ahmed understood her words, he realized that she didn't want to get into a relationship. She was forced to do so, as she couldn't embarrass Ahmed or confront him at all, as she considered him a brother and a colleague. Shocked and astonished, Ahmed discovered that Amira objected to a relationship with him, and he was stuck in the friend zone. As the school days passed...

Amira was sitting on a chair in front of the class, absent-minded and silent, as was her usual calm nature. However, she looked exhausted and tired from her addiction to staying up late every night. Her battered head suddenly moved involuntarily, unable to sleep due to insomnia and excessive thinking, as she kept watching movies and TV series.

When Ahmed suddenly noticed the movement of her mangled head, he noticed that she was experiencing involuntary head movements without realizing that Ahmed was watching her, as he was sitting in the chair behind her. After class, during a break, he told his friends about Amira and the strange, frightening shaking of her head.

After she had lunch during the break, she noticed that they were watching her because of Ahmed, who had told them without regard for her feelings. She was shocked when they made fun of her and laughed in front of the students, both male and female, without regard for her feelings. She was subjected to bullying and ridicule from them.

She became silent and sullen, unable to defend herself in front of them, so she simply ignored them and continued eating her lunch in silence. She felt relieved that she had made the right decision not to be involved with Ahmed, after she was certain that she had made the right choice for the future without making any mistakes, as she had never been involved with anyone.

When Ahmed broke up their relationship, he made her lose trust and security without thinking about Amira's feelings, sadness and pain. He broke her kind and innocent soul. Days passed, and as time passed, Amira began to fall into depression. She didn't stand up for herself in front of anyone, not knowing how to become strong and tough one day. She was so innocent and young that she was afraid of confronting the students, both male and female, so she distanced herself from Ahmed and ignored his presence.

She remained patient, and became cold after high school, unable to stop his admiration for her. The days and weeks passed so quickly, and they became like classmates with little to no conversation, and no communication at all. After high school, they each enrolled in different colleges and never met again.

Amira no longer remembers the past since she joined this college. She changed because she reconciled with herself, began to love herself, and turned a new page in her life. She became strong and sociable, able to get rid of her painful past. She was no longer the old, sad, weak, and introverted Amira. Rather, she transformed into a new personality with a strong, strong spirit, happy with herself, after she transformed her boring life into a new one.

But she didn't wear makeup or change her style of dress, remaining a normal, simple girl. On the other hand, Ahmed was a student whose talent for drawing developed in the College of Fine Arts. He later fell in love with his classmate, Maryam, and became engaged to her. Maryam was his classmate, and he was no longer the same as he was before. He became successful at drawing after participating in art exhibitions several times with his friends.

Two years later, I met Amira Ahmed again, after a long time in Tahrir Square, at an educational course. From inside the door of the educational center, Ahmed Salah appeared, smiling, his face expressing longing.

He still had the same outward appearance as before, unchanged from the past; he was still handsome. He greeted them after waving his hands over his arms, looking surprised and amazed because he was meeting Amira for the first time in a long time. Then he smiled as soon as he finished greeting her, and they exchanged greetings and peace. Amira looked surprised after feeling nervous and anxious, because she was surprised by Ahmed's presence with her.

For the first time outside of her old school, she never imagined she would be shocked by his presence, as she felt confused. She remembered her painful memories as soon as she saw Ahmed, but she no longer felt sad and weak whenever she saw him for the first time. She had become strong and tough, learning to accept her own flaws thanks to Ahmed, who opened her eyes to her flaws before her strengths, without her even knowing it. Then Ahmed graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts after four years, and began working in a company far from his artistic field after graduating from college, and became engaged to his girlfriend Maryam after he became self-reliant.

As for Amira, she moved forward in her life, forgot about her painful past, and became preoccupied with herself. She no longer remembered it at all after accepting the past, which was filled with pain and cruelty. She learned to grow stronger with time, said goodbye to the past, forgave herself, and continued moving forward without looking back a day.

## Love is not reciprocated

*Love is not real for every heart that falls into the dungeon of dreams, like an illusion in the imagination, even if it awakens late... One party who made the mistake in the illusion will not be repeated twice, so the heart will remain closed and will be deprived of love and intense loneliness without companionship in this miserable life, forever.*

Nancy was a first-year middle school student at a special education school. One day, while taking a break after school, she went down the stairs to the spacious hall and saw Abdul Rahman, a third-year middle school student, standing there talking and joking with his friends. She was curious when she first saw him, so she walked over to him with her friends from the same class, standing next to the group of mutual friends who were listening to him. Abdul Rahman was well-liked by everyone, strong and intelligent, but dishonest and full of flaws. He lived in the Shubra El-Kheima neighborhood and had five sisters.

He made jokes so well that he made everyone laugh, even the teachers and the principal. He treated everyone kindly and was different from other boys, being sociable and skillfully hiding his feelings from everyone. Nancy felt interested in him because she had laughed because of him after a long period of unhappiness, and her soulless smile turned into a loud laugh for the first time.

After school, Nancy was sitting in the back seat of a taxi with her driver and teacher at the same time. She was distracted, and laughed as she remembered his jokes, and a bright smile remained on her face for the first time. It had never occurred to her that she had fallen in love with him without the other party knowing.

He didn't even notice her presence. Nancy kept her secrets to herself and didn't tell anyone about her secret, buried love. Her thoughts wandered on her way home, and she only came to her senses when the car stopped in front of her house. She was disturbed by her driver who kept staring at her strangely. Nancy felt scared and worried about his suspicious manner and behavior; he was about to harass her.

She hurried home, went up to her private room on the third floor, lay down on her bed, stared at the ceiling, and became lost in the thought of the student who made her laugh. She imagined their mutual friends until she became obsessed with him, and every night she saw him in beautiful, wonderful, romantic dreams.

But the harsh reality was that she had become nothing more than a sister and a friend to him. Nancy was beautiful and beloved by all the students, both male and female, but she lied and Madeup excuses for her difficult circumstances.

Nancy was poor, living in a working-class neighborhood near her school. Abdul Rahman fell in love with Nadine, who was in sixth grade, and they became lovers publicly in front of the students. Abdul Rahman transferred from his old school to the current one, where Nancy and Nadine studied. The beautiful days passed, filled with laughter, madness, and joking in front of their mutual friends, and Nancy grew accustomed to seeing him with Nadine.

She felt jealous of her because she owned Abdul Rahman's heart, and she couldn't stop her heart from beating with pain. She expected that Abdul Rahman and Nadine would get married in the future, so she tried to be patient and ignore the feelings of pain and cruelty towards her. One day While they were talking about their childhood memories, Abdel Rahman showed a video of a nursery party, and it turned out that he had attended the same nursery as Nancy. The video showed a beautiful little girl dancing with her father, falling in love with Abdel Rahman for the first time without him knowing. She looked at him and thought that fate had brought them together at the same nursery and even went to school. As they say, childhood love is the most beautiful love in life.

She looked surprised and told him that she wanted to watch the video. Abdul Rahman agreed after noticing that she was in the video with him in the same nursery. He asked her to give him a flash drive to transfer the video to her. Nancy, who was eager to watch the video in the hope of reliving her childhood memories, agreed and gave him her flash drive. He transferred the video to her. When she got home, she ran to the living room, as she couldn't wait to watch the video. She sat on the chair in front of her device and inserted the flash drive to watch the video on the computer.

When she got home, she ran to the living room, as she couldn't wait to watch the video. She sat on the chair in front of her device and inserted the flash drive to watch the video on the computer.

She was the little girl who seemed happy and danced with Abdulrahman in nursery, then met him at the same school by chance. She seemed surprised; she had never imagined that would happen. Once, a problem arose between her and her father, so she sat on the sidewalk behind the school, staring into nothingness, lost in her father's problem. Suddenly, she found Abdulrahman sitting next to her on a sunny day, and after looking at her, he asked her:

- Why do you sit alone and sad all the time?

- I don't know, but I like to be alone.

They talked together, but she didn't dare confess her love to him. She used to be quiet and silent in front of the students in the past, but now she's sociable and popular with everyone. She began imitating the movements of celebrities in films and TV series, and even teachers and professors at school. She tried to show off her movements and create funny expressions, combined with facial expressions and body language, in front of them, as if she were on stage in front of an audience. She made them laugh and applaud her. She was good at imitating, acting, and creating jokes that she learned from watching Indian, Turkish, and American movies, until everyone loved her because of her talent in acting and imitation. The news of Abdul Rahman and Nadine's separation spread among the students.

What happened between them was nothing more than a pastime in early adolescence, until their relationship turned into friendship. As time passed, the relationship between Nancy and Abdul Rahman began to grow stronger. In the early days of the relationship, Nancy was excited for the first time, as Abdul Rahman flirted with her openly in front of the students at school. But he never reciprocated her love; he merely played with her, without feelings. Nancy fell into the trap without knowing it. But their relationship only lasted a few days and they broke up, even though she still loved him.

Abdul Rahman finished high school at the same school and began college, majoring in art education. Nancy was still in high school. She no longer saw him, but she still loved him. She used to talk to him on her Facebook account, but she closed her account after she moved to the third year of high school to focus on her studies.

This made Abdul Rahman think she had blocked him. He didn't ask about her, and he began to suspect her without realizing it. Their relationship was cut off, and they didn't speak for a whole year.

A year later, Nancy graduated and enrolled in the same college as Abdul Rahman, without intending to be by his side. On her first day of school, Nancy was both happy and nervous when she found Abdul Rahman sitting with his friends. When he looked at her, he ignored her, and Nancy didn't understand the reason for his cold behavior.

But she discovered through their mutual friend that Abdul Rahman had told her that Nancy had blocked him on social media. Here, she understood why he had ignored her: he had misjudged her, and she couldn't explain her position. Every time she saw Abdul Rahman talking to the students, she felt jealous.

As time passed, she discovered that Abdul Rahman was a womanizer, not at all respectful, and was no longer what he once was. He wasn't the best person, but she had fallen in love with him one-sidedly nine years earlier.

Nancy was forced to step on her heart, struggling to stay away from him in order to preserve her mental health. As time passed, she abandoned her love for him and closed her heart forever, never to be able to open it to anyone again.

Months later, she met Abdul Rahman by chance at an educational center for a course, but she became cold and impassive, ignoring his presence the entire time and not caring about him. She was no longer the same as she used to be; she had become a strong and tough personality. I learned from a social media site that Abdul Rahman was engaged.

Nancy felt happy and content, stopped loving him, got rid of him, and erased his existence from her life forever. She learned to love herself and be strong, and decided to move forward without looking back.

## **Mere admiration where love is not born**

*We always love those who admire us, but we do not always love those we admire.*

***François de La Rochefoucauld***

Admiration is born at first sight in early youth, but with the passage of time, admiration fades and disappears little by little after the stage of awareness. A person does not love with the heart and mind only, but with the heart with self-confidence, security and permanent happiness, as love grows with habit.

On the first day of school, it never occurred to the beautiful, smart, and ambitious girl, with the appearance of the college gate filled with a long, wide corridor in front of the large main building with the different departments, with the presence of male and female students, that Nada Khaled would enter from inside the hall, holding a book after she had tied her arms tightly, and she looked beautiful and her features were clear. Then she smiled a bright smile after she wore a pink dress with the shape of colorful fruits, she sat on the chair and walked to the college hall, she was very excited,

She changed her old life to a new one, as she had never experienced such a different life before, as if she had entered her new world, to the point that her blank page began to fill with new days, as if everything seemed new next to the tree that the sun shines on the floor of the wide hall and the lecture halls crowded with hundreds of male and female students.

With the appearance of her old friends and the presence of new people, she met a group of students from her First year class after graduating from her old school. As she entered the corridor inside the spacious hall, the young man appeared accompanied by his mother, who was excited about her grown son, so she suddenly placed his arms in hers.

So she asked one of her friends in the new group that Nada was with, and her mother was impressed by Nada, who was very bright and beautiful, making you fall in love with her for no reason, so she got to know them for the sake of her eldest son who kept watching Nada, and Nada was nervous because she found the new young man in the same class as them and from the same circumstances as her.

Then she met a student who looked fat and had dark skin, and a narrow smile on his face. She greeted him and he greeted her back in front of the group. She discovered that his name was Muhammad, and he was smiling in front of her.

When Mohamed Hesham was a smart student who mostly wore red striped clothes because he had computer skills and could fix electronics after a breakdown, Nada fell in love with Mohamed Hesham because of his social intelligence and his different strengths, because he was very ambitious, so she became impressed, so she started to ask him about college work in front of her friends, so he helped her with her studies.

Everyone noticed them together most of the time, and as time passed, the rumor spread between them, and everyone thought they were lovers because they appeared together a lot, and Nada became the talk of the students amidst the talk, gossip, and backbiting about their relationship, after she appeared with him all the time, so she became upset and annoyed because they asked her about Mohamed Hesham, When asked if they had a relationship within the college, she replied that she had no relationship with Mohamed Hesham other than a college colleague. He became angry and tense after rumors spread about his relationship with Nada. Mohamed Hesham felt embarrassed and distanced himself from her during that period. He no longer spoke to her or saw her again, fearing what people would say.

As time passed, they grew apart because everyone noticed that Nada was upset with them, so she ignored the rumors, while he couldn't confront her, so he became upset and angry with the untrue and trivial rumors, because Nada tried to get close to him, but she did nothing except ask him about assignments, reports, knowledge of materials, cooperation and help regarding college studies only Because of his personal skill, there is no connection between them at all, and she considers him only her classmate, and she can never fall in love with him, as she has never loved him. Rather, I fell in love with Muhammad Hisham because of his strange personality and his amazing intelligence mixed with mystery and secrets in his private life, and with the difference of opinions in his discussion between him and them in conversation, and that he is not a man and has weakness and stupidity in his frightening personality, and he is a coward, so he still runs away from confronting people

Over time, he became bad, criticizing others in a harsh manner, and knowing how to make himself superior to others. He is arrogant and conceited. Mohamed Hesham was sitting in front of her, watching her without her noticing his looks in this different way from behind her back. He kept looking at Nada, who was distracted in the lectures the whole time, in a strange way, because he admired her for her kind spirit, her amazing intelligence, and her beautiful smile. He kept hinting at her about getting engaged all this time.

When Nada understood Mohamed Hesham's hints that he wanted to enter into a relationship with her, and he brought up the subject of his marriage to her, she distanced herself from him and refused completely. She did not want to be in a relationship with him, and she was unable to feel psychological comfort, harmony, or understanding with him.

He is just a classmate to her, and she was sure that Mohamed Hesham is really difficult to deal with because of his big mistakes with others, and it is not easy to understand him, as he makes others feel embarrassed by him, and he makes excuses and lies in the middle of the conversation, so he does not like anyone to interrupt him while he is speaking in the middle of the discussion in front of the male and female students As Nada watched him, she began to hate him. Mohamed Hesham interfered in her dress style and controlled her. She couldn't trust him and was afraid he would hurt her. Nada was upset with him because of his selfish and arrogant behavior. She hated him after her modest personality changed into a restricted one due to his control over her outward appearance. He still ordered her not to do these things.

He felt jealous of her, fell in love with her, and watched her the rest of the time. She felt annoyed with him and could no longer bear it. He kept arguing with others about things, so she constantly ignored him. She no longer communicated with him and kept distancing herself from him completely. After the past few months, Nada walked to the college hall after finishing her lecture, and met his mother who appeared with her eldest son, Mohamed Hesham, at the college among their mutual friends. She shook hands with her after greeting her, and tried to get to know her because she had impressed his mother after he told her that he had fallen in love with her. Then, Nada was very nervous and confused, because she suspected him, and his mother was very clear, smiling in an exaggerated and limitless way, then smiled in front of her and they exchanged handshakes, and she was standing in front of her out of respect for the elders. Mohamed Hesham tried to pursue her and communicate with her several times for the first time after the false rumors about them stopped, so he became attached to her, fell in love with her and could not ignore her, as she is smart and ambitious

But Nada became annoyed by his annoying presence after she treated him superficially in front of him, so she constantly ignored him. Then Mohamed Hesham appeared on the email and in the emails, especially on the social networking sites, but Mohamed Hesham was very smart, so he tried to unblock her on the email, and then he tried to send messages to her via email, because he wanted to communicate with her after she blocked him on the social networking sites, except for the email.

Then, to her surprise, she received an email from Mohamed Hesham. She felt scared and didn't want to talk to him at all, because she knew he was an internet whizz. She decided to delete the email address permanently, to distance herself from him without speaking to him, and to never approach him again, because he was just a cowardly, weak young man who couldn't confront her. She noticed his frightening stare and his inspection of her clothes, so she ignored his presence and pretended to be strong and cold because of her own freedom. As time passed, Nada was no longer the same as she used to be, and she began to distance herself from her classmates in the same department.

Mohamed Hesham was the eldest son and lived in the Matariya neighborhood with his well-off family. His mother was a housewife, and his younger brother, Ahmed, was studying at the Helwan College of Commerce and working at a mobile phone store near his home. Ahmed was close to his father, considering him his oldest friend, unlike his older brother, Mohamed Hesham, whom Ahmed never treated with love due to differences in opinion and personality. Mohamed Hesham was lonely and somewhat immature in a family environment, and he was not honest, as he was constantly jealous of others around him.

He was eccentric and crazy, unlike other boys, and had very strange ideas. He was self-sufficient in computer work at home, a skill he had learned at an early age. He was close to his mother, who was attached to him, but he was never close to his father, as his relationship with them was never good due to his father's lack of understanding.

In the third year, Nada was sitting, and he was standing. He tried to talk to her, then Mohamed Hisham indirectly asked her to marry him and hinted to her. She secretly rejected his request and ignored his hint, without him knowing that she didn't want to marry him. She also recently discovered from her classmate Maryam that she was the one who made him want to marry her, which seemed shocking. She learned from someone who had told her about her colleague Maryam, because he was determined and had a strong desire to get married. She almost agreed, had it not been for her stubbornness, as he was certain of her stubbornness and insistence on refusing without accepting. She could never bear his presence without him knowing her feelings.

She hated Mohamed Hesham and Mariam, believing they were talking behind her back without her knowledge. She was shocked because she never imagined that her colleague would incite Mohamed to force her to marry him against her will. But it was too late when Nada no longer felt anything towards Mohamed after he asked her about going with him on a group outing to a famous shopping mall.

She refused, saying she didn't want to go with him. She had stopped going out with her friends altogether, and she could no longer tolerate the group's hypocrisy, gossip, and backbiting. She had become bad in the eyes of others, and she never met or communicated with them again.

When he graduated, Mohamed Hesham was unable to find Nada one last time. She disappeared into the group of fellow students, leaving them forever, never to be seen again. She cut off contact with them and sought to avoid their presence after she drifted apart. He is still constantly looking for work after graduating, and he has never forgotten Nada, thinking about her constantly.

As for Nada Khaled, she lived in a poor neighborhood with her simple family, consisting of her father, a skilled chef who worked in restaurants; her mother, a housewife; and her younger brother, Youssef. She was an ordinary, lighthearted, and different girl, unlike any other, as she was extremely respectful and modest in her small, cramped environment. She was close to her parents' relatives because she was single and unemployed, and helped her mother with the housework as usual. She became content with her lot, accepting this simple life because she was self-sufficient in the home and loved helping all her loved ones and people. She thus became kind-hearted, dreaming of raising a beautiful and kind family, and wishing to marry a respectable and honorable man from a respectable and good family.

One year later, in July, Nada had her own Facebook page and was sitting on the couch browsing the news, with none of her old classmates around. As usual, she sometimes got bored and stayed home with nothing to do. A hidden message appeared in the messages archive on her personal page, so she went in to read a written message from Mohamed Hesham, in which he told her that they should perhaps discuss matters of marriage between them, as he might want to marry her. She seemed surprised and shocked, because he had never forgotten her since she disappeared, and had tried to send her messages, but she had been busy recently, so she remained surprised because he had tried to reach her by searching for her full name, without her appearing on her personal page with him. So she was afraid to show her reaction after she blocked him permanently.

One day, Nada went for a job interview after leaving home, and arrived at tall buildings surrounded by trees in front of the large club. But she never imagined that, after falling into a state of shock, she would find Mohamed Hesham standing in front of her next to a group full of unemployed people. She met him after a long time, and she almost backed away after hesitating for a moment, but she couldn't escape her painful past. She seemed very clingy, trying to appear calm in this difficult way.

As for Mohamed Hesham, he looked nervous and confused, unable to greet her after standing next to his friend. As Nada tried to ignore the awkward situation, they went upstairs to the office. She walked with them up the stairs to the open door, sat in the meeting room, and then entered the large room.

Nada asked him after looking at him deeply, because she was curious, bold, and not embarrassed in front of him, saying:

- You tried to send me messages. Why did you do that?

He looked nervous and confused, not knowing how to respond to her. He tried to compose himself, and looked at her, saying:

- Why? I tried to talk to you about marriage after I wanted to ask about you. No problem, right?

After gathering her courage, Nada said,

- There's a classmate you know who was in the same class as us. Her name is Nada Radhi, just like me. Maybe you'd like to marry her. She's better than me because she's skilled at cooking and housework. But I'm not the ideal wife, am I?

Mohamed Hesham was convinced by Nada Khaled's words after understanding her position. He circled his head and looked at her, saying,

- Perhaps I'll think carefully and try to talk to her, but what matters to me is the exchange of feelings when we marry the One we love, of course, without an arranged marriage.

She responded this way after she gained confidence, saying to him:

- I know, but many people marry without love through an arranged marriage, and then fall in love after the marriage, as is said in human nature within Egyptian society.

Mohamed Hesham didn't respond to her words. He seemed confused and absent-minded, unable to find an answer to her questions. Nada completed her question with a curious look, as she suddenly remembered something that came to her mind. She looked at him, her eyes narrowed, and observed his body language.

- I want to ask a question for just a moment: How did you find out about my profile? No one remembers me, and they never tried to reach me after I disappeared, but you're the only one trying to contact me, and you found me so easily because you searched for my full name, right?

After looking at her and gathering his courage several times, he said

- Yes, but I wrote you a private message after I visited your profile. I wanted to request to add you by sending you a message, but you closed your profile without anyone seeing your posts or comments. So I sent you a private message because I wanted to talk to you, and I found myself blocked because you suddenly blocked me.

She responded in this clever way, appearing indifferent, saying,

- Okay, but I did that because I don't want to talk to you at all, and I'm no longer with them after being away from you forever.

He replied

- Okay, no problem. You're free to live your own life, of course, and I didn't force you at all.

Then they parted ways, each moving on with their lives, never to see each other again after the meeting room ended. They were never able to talk to each other again, so he finally stopped trying. Nada moved forward in her life and tried to find a job. She continued to suffer from her empty life and tried several times, then stopped due to surrender. She no longer knew anything about Mohamed Hesham in the recent period. As for Muhammad, he felt jealous when he learned from his friends that they had gotten married. He started looking for another ideal bride after giving up on Nada. He stopped trying and stopped trying because of her repeated refusals.

## **Dreams and reality**

*I was hoping... I was dreaming... But the hope did not come true and remained in my mind just another dream.*

***Sahar Khalifa***

Nada Khaled has been writing in her diary about her dreams and goals since graduating from high school. She completed her studies in art education and wanted to achieve her dreams and goals. She dreamed of becoming a photographer, as she wanted to open a photography and drawing gallery. She loves the arts of photography and drawing and sees them as her calling in life.

She chose photography as a career when she discovered her talent in the field, because she couldn't give up her beautiful experience and simple dream. On one of her family's travel-filled trips, she learned photography and became accustomed to taking pictures of nature, animals, and museums, because she loves unedited, natural images.

Her hobby then evolved into a new experience using a camera. She asked her father to buy her a new camera to fulfill her dream of becoming a photographer and holding an art exhibition. Her father agreed and asked his friend who worked abroad to buy the camera. His friend asked him what type of camera the talented girl wanted.

Then her father asked her:

- What kind of camera do you want?

She replied:

- I don't know. I'm not an expert on cameras. I'm a beginner, Dad.

She had never tried to choose a suitable type, so her father's friend picked it out for her, but she regretted wasting all that time, as she could have chosen a camera that suited her based on image quality and clarity. A few days later, the camera arrived from abroad, and her father paid for it. Nada was delighted to receive the camera for the first time, and she wanted to use it to create vlogs and start uploading videos to a YouTube channel with her brother. She wanted to provide useful and important content with a powerful and inspiring message.

But she never imagined that one of the people closest to her would destroy her dream and happiness in the blink of an eye. Her mother was an obstacle to her dream, not allowing her to go alone to film events outside the home, fearing for her after she reached adolescence. Her mother was sometimes overprotective. When Nada stopped taking photographs and simply gave up, she lost her dream, became lazy, and no longer relied on her mother after failing several times. She participated in an exhibition at the Orthodox Cultural Center in Abbassia, but she had no photographs of her own.

She tried to go with her mother to any place that suited her taste in photography to participate in the cultural center's competition, but she failed to take pictures in the park because of the high cost, and because her mother wanted her daughter to win a photography competition to help her, so her mother asked the security guard in the park:

- How much does it cost to take a camera shot inside the park, please?

He said to her:

- Five hundred pounds per hour inside the park.

She thanked him and left with her upset daughter. She decided to give up on her dream, but she printed some of her brother's works for the photography exhibition. However, she made the mistake of placing the photos on a personal photo album under her bed, ruining the prints due to the black spots that appeared on them, making it difficult for her to verify the authenticity of the photos with the competition director.

The competition director understood the situation and allowed her to participate, giving her a second chance to correct the photos. Nada printed the photos on the portrait, perfectly smooth and free of black spots. After the printing was complete, she gave them to the competition director to be stored temporarily in preparation for displaying them in the exhibition at the Cultural Center, whose title bears her name as a talented contestant: Nada Khaled.

On the day of the competition's award ceremony, which celebrated diverse talents in photography, drawing, and sculpture, mutual friends and parents of different faiths gathered in the evening. All mothers were honored with certificates of appreciation on the occasion of Mother's Day in the church gallery.

But Nada didn't win, and she noticed that the certificate was in another girl's name—a name swap. She searched for the original girl with the incorrect certificate, corrected the names, and Nada received her original certificate.

Nada was angry at the lack of appreciation and hated photography for the first time because she cheated on her brother's work, even though he recognized her talent for photography. No one supported her in pursuing her dream. She still lied to herself sometimes, and she lost her confidence. She succumbed to sadness, realizing that she hadn't succeeded because she had resorted to cheating to avoid missing out.

A year and a half later, she came across a post by chance announcing an exhibition at the Sakia El Sawy Culturewheel in Zamalek Street, organized by the Let's Learn Photography group on Facebook. She tried to realize her dream, so she registered and participated on the Sakia El Sawy Culturewheel's website.

But this time, she shared photos of her own work, taken with her phone, rather than her brother's, because she learned from her mistake. After obtaining her father's approval, the gallery director, Paul, chose one of three photos she had emailed to a Google address, as he had extensive experience in photography.

He agreed to participate with her photographs in the Sawy Culturewheel exhibition. Nada was excited to realize her dream in the future. Paul was very skillful in choosing a single photograph that depicted a wooden window against a landscape of a spacious, bright farm filled with green plants next to the cemetery, inside the living room of a country mansion.

Her father then paid for the Zamalek exhibition, where the printing press would be responsible for the director's death. On the day of the photography exhibition, Nada, overjoyed at realizing her dream, prepared herself and accompanied it to the Saqqara al-Sawy district. However, the director's decision changed the venue, as the audience was right in front of everyone in the exhibition hall.

It didn't take more than an hour, and then they returned home after a long journey. Nada felt hopeless and frustrated after comparing herself to them, only to discover that her photos weren't beautiful at all. She couldn't believe she'd become so impressed by the work of distinguished people. Their photos were their own, and they looked much more beautiful than hers. But she lost her enthusiasm, feeling that she lacked the talent for photography, and she lost her self-confidence.

In the main room, her father was sitting on the bed in front of the television. He asked Nada to see the photo she had taken at the gallery. After she entered, she stood in front of him and handed him the photo album she had taken from the gallery.

Then her father said,

- Your picture isn't good at all, because I didn't like it, of course, and I spent all this money to have you participate in the photography exhibition, Nada.

After giving up on her dreams and looking at her angry father, she said,

- I know, you're right, because I'm not talented, and I've failed many times. But you're crushing my dreams and making them fade because of you.

She continued, breathing a sigh of relief:

- But I want to sell my camera, because I no longer like photography at all.

Her father refused, ignoring her and saying:

- I will never agree to sell the camera. You promised me you wouldn't sell it for a long time, didn't you, my daughter?

Nada hesitated and said

- I know, Dad, but we have to sell the camera because I've failed and I won't continue, and I gave up photography a long time ago.

He objected to her request, then reminded her that she promised him not to sell the camera, and he agreed with her, but she gave up because of her constant mistakes, so she lost her dream and passion, and she gave up photography over time because of her preoccupations, except for her mobile phone photography, and she stopped using her own cameras.

Months and years passed as she traveled alone, until she decided to share her diverse hobbies on Instagram. Over time, she turned to watercolor painting after entering her sophomore year of university to make the most of her free time, and her talent for drawing and photography developed significantly.

She dreamed of becoming a painter and photographer, and then opening a painting and photography gallery in the future. She tried various hobbies, step by step, because she wanted to search for her true self and discover herself after her hobbies developed in a short period. She tried to practice her distinctive hobby, watercolor painting, while she was busy with her current study period, but she gave up due to psychological and academic pressures.

She turned into another fragile girl with no soul at all because of her difficult problems and cried alone after looking up at the dark sky, and found herself lost, so she gave up, then tore up her paintings and stopped painting finally and forever, because there was a lack in her life for unknown reasons.

She had failed several times, and no one encouraged or supported her on her dream path. She simply gave up on her dream and became constantly resentful and sad. She graduated from the College of Fine Arts, never trying new things, and remained a routine girl, living life without a dream or purpose for the next five years.

## **Friendship is not real**

*Don't call everyone who passes through your life a friend, lest you one day say,  
Friends change.*

***Gibran Khalil Gibran***

Sometimes those we considered friends in our youth deceive us. We see that life doesn't go exactly as we wish, but rather in the opposite direction. As time passes, we find that personalities change, and ideas are no longer the same as before, due to differences in opinions, ideas, and personalities. Each person was raised in a different environment, with no similarities between them, between ignorance and awareness in the cycle of life on an endless path. We don't want to go back to the past, but it keeps haunting us, chasing us with regret, pain, and cruelty. It's important to rise up, resist, and let go of the negative things so we can move forward on a long road without friends. At that moment, one discovers themselves for the first time.

Marian Ayman lives in the Ezbet El Nakhl neighborhood and is the only daughter of a poor Christian family. She was quiet and shy in elementary and middle school, and chose to be Salma's friend during a period of intense loneliness and isolation among students. She never left her side, or so Salma thought, considering her her first real friend after a failed friendship with Rowan, the fake friend she had considered her her entire life. Salma was unintelligent and lonely, and over time she grew attached to Marianne without realizing it. However, she never imagined Marianne would be like Rowan. She felt strange about them after seeing photos of Rowan and Marianne together on social media, showing them happy and close friends outside of school on outings without her.

Salma felt sad; maybe everyone was replacing her with someone new, as usual. She found herself alone for the second time; she didn't feel sad for them and had never considered Marianne a friend. She didn't like Marianne's personality at all because of Rowan's actions. She didn't want to get attached to her; she had gone through some difficult times, never liked Marianne in the first place, and didn't want to remain alone.

She no longer feels comfortable around Marianne, seeing their friendship as inauthentic, as she's always been a substitute in everyone's lives. They've gotten used to abandoning her and leaving her alone, far from everyone's attention, once the relationship is over. She never felt like a friend to anyone, and they treated her like a bad girl for no fault of hers, due to her ordinary personality that lacked a sense of fun and happiness. No one knew her true story, as they judged her boring personality without considering her good feelings towards them.

Suddenly, Marianne was unable to complete her studies due to the high cost of living. She dropped out after completing middle school because her father could not afford the tuition and because her residence was far from her school. Salma was shocked when Marianne learned of this, and she returned to her difficult and harsh isolation once again.

The students turned away from her, leaving her in her deep sorrow. Days and years passed while she was in her harsh solitude, not knowing how to make the most of her time. She would chat with Marianne via WhatsApp during her school days, and then Salma, Marianne, Joseph, and Rowan would meet in Zoom chats, sharing live video calls with each other all the time.

Years later, Salma heard that Marianne, the only classmate who had dropped out, had married and had a child. Marianne continued to talk to Salma frequently throughout middle school and into her current high school years.

In her own room, Salma was sitting in front of her laptop. She opened the Zoom video call app and agreed to join Rowan, Marianne, and Joseph. After the group video call ended, she started a private video call at Joseph's request, who wanted to speak to her alone. She agreed without much thought.

He wasn't a good, kind young man. He seemed like a loiterer in a working-class neighborhood, wearing strange clothes and sporting a scary tattoo on his arm. She continued to talk to him on normal days, but she was scared and nervous, afraid that someone in her family might notice her or expose her at school.

She didn't know whether or not she was making a mistake by allowing herself to meet young men out of her excessive curiosity. After asking about her, Joseph decided to test her. He made her swear not to tell anyone, which she did. Then he told her some facts about Marianne and her best friend, Rowan.

Salma seemed shocked and surprised when she discovered the truth about Marianne: She had been in a relationship with Joseph before marrying someone else, did not love her husband, and still wanted to continue her relationship with Joseph. Marianne tried to rekindle their relationship after her marriage, but he refused to be her lover without her husband's knowledge.

He warned Salma against getting close to Marianne, asserting that she was not kind-hearted, and persuaded her to stay away from her old friend. He told her for the first time the truth about Marianne and Rowan, and she was surprised and wondered: Why did he choose her to tell the truth? He tried to test her, but she didn't understand why he wanted to tell her.

As time passed, she actually carried out his warning, distancing herself from Marianne and Rowan for the time being and never speaking to them again after leaving Marianne for good. During that time, she was no longer used to Marianne's presence in her life, so she abandoned her without even realizing it. Salma became preoccupied with her studies and no longer remembered Marianne, so she distanced herself from her permanently.

At the same time, she distanced herself from Joseph, Marianne's ex-boyfriend, and could no longer stand his annoying presence in front of the male and female students at the college or the educational course centers, because he took advantage of her weakness when he wanted to go out with her and see her, but she refused to preserve her reputation. As the days, weeks, months, and years passed, Marianne became an unknown girl. Old school friends no longer remembered her or contacted her. As for Marianne, she continued to go to church and meet mutual friends so she wouldn't live alone between her mother, her reckless husband, and her young child.

She remained a housewife after her marriage, in addition to her separation from her cousin Youssef and her ex-boyfriend Joseph. She no longer loved her husband and felt upset and bored when alone, so she became preoccupied with housework.

Her old friends began to drift away from her over time, and out of a desire to avoid feeling lonely, she continued to communicate with her close friends, perhaps yearning for old memories. But in reality, she was an ordinary, superficial girl, like other underage girls who married at an early age.

Years later, Salma went to a charity to donate hearing aids, and she was involved in sponsoring the famous Footballer Mohamed Salah. Salma made her way to the office of the famous Resala Association, entered a crowded room, and was surprised to find Marianne standing there holding her young child. Marianne noticed her and smiled fondly, missing her so much. Salma noticed that Marianne was no longer the same as she had been before; her features looked tired, she was filled with sadness, and she had gained excessive weight after giving birth to her child.

Salma felt shocked, surprised, and worried as she suddenly remembered Joseph and what he had said about her after meeting Marianne over the years, while everyone was busy preparing medical tools and equipment and examining medical reports.

Salma asked Marian how she was after trying to talk to her in general terms, and wanted to take her number, but Salma refused because she never felt comfortable with her presence after believing what Joseph had said about her, and she didn't try to differentiate between truth and lies.

She didn't want everyone to reveal the truth about themselves to her. She hesitated because she couldn't find answers to her questions about their personal lives, so she could never ask about them. Therefore, she distanced herself from them, having learned to give rights to those who deserve them, and that everyone is free to live their own lives. She didn't interfere in Marianne and Rowan's lives at all.

She forced a fake smile in front of her, then said goodbye to Marianne for the last time after the required paperwork was rejected. The Resala Charity Association rejected her application due to her high electricity bill, unlike the poor, where Salma lived in a middle-class environment.

Salma simply gave up, left the association, and never saw Marianne again. In recent years, Marianne had grown close to Rowan after dropping out of high school. Because of her extreme loneliness, they were inseparable, becoming even closer friends than Salma.

Marianne contacted Shaimaa, a mutual friend, because she wanted to get Salma's number from her, perhaps yearning for the nostalgia of her school days. Shaimaa asked Salma to forward her current number to Marianne, their mutual friend, and said that Marianne wanted to talk to her. Salma was surprised by Marianne's desire to communicate via WhatsApp, but she refused because she didn't want her in her life, perhaps to rid herself of the painful past that constantly haunted her in the present.

Meanwhile, Shaimaa was confused, not knowing what to say to Marianne, so she asked Salma over WhatsApp. Salma told her that she had to make up excuses because she didn't care about Marianne's presence at all. Shaimaa accepted this and made up fake excuses for Salma.

Salma was forced to distance herself from her completely. She cut off all contact, keeping only Shaima and Marianne as old friends, then abandoned them. Salma remains alone and friendless, having learned patience after her many experiences with failed relationships and fake friendships throughout her life.

It's hard for friendships to last forever, but it's easy for fake friendships to break and for relationships to deepen. After several months, Marianne tried to contact Salma through Miriam, their other mutual friend. Miriam asked Salma for permission to send her new number, but Salma refused a second time, becoming furious at her hatred for Marianne, whom she still didn't understand at all. Salma went through a difficult period due to the loss of mutual friends and the severing of ties with them. She became lonely, constantly crying in secret, and always feeling pain when she felt lonely and bored.

For the past five months, she had been in contact with them intermittently, then stopping, distancing herself from them, and retreating several times. She had tried to maintain a relationship with them after her previous disappearance, but suddenly gave up when everyone disappeared and they no longer missed her or contacted her due to her suspicious behavior and frequent disappearances.

She got annoyed with them because they were late in responding to her messages and because they were busy with their own lives, so they stopped communicating with her forever. She abandoned them and left everyone because of her conflicting thoughts, so she failed to rebuild relationships again, and became friendless, like a dead person without a soul. She destroyed her life between loneliness, boredom, and emptiness. She remained locked in the house all the time, doing nothing, living in silence, no one ever remembering her. As a result, she disappeared from their lives forever, and her failed story became endless, a dead end.

## **Fake Friendship**

*I've lost a few friendships because of this. This is the hardest for me. I find it very uncomfortable to know that I was once a close friend of someone, and because of jealousy, misunderstanding, and so on, those friendships have faded.*

**Donald Johansson**

Life is like a story that narrates the behind-the-scenes of difficult scenes and events, then turns into a black box of painful memories of the past, filled with regret and pain, where sadness and loneliness without a friend prevail. No one supports us, so we remain in isolation and loneliness. We have learned, no matter what happens, not to trust or pin hopes on our circle of friends, no matter how they come and go from our lives as usual during periods of life, when temporary happiness disappears.

In elementary school, students noticed a simple-looking, poor-looking man carrying his daughter, his arm around her body. She was sitting on a wooden chair in the classroom with her younger classmates, assisted by her father, who had amputated her left leg.

Watch this humane gesture, including Salma, the young student. After the father entered with his daughter, Rowan, he placed her in the front of the class and then left for work. Salma hadn't known her before. A friendship began between Salma and Rowan.

Salma was happy to have found a good classmate like Rowan, and she was probably fooling herself at the time. Their friendship continued throughout elementary school, after which Salma and Rowan moved on to the first year of middle school.

Salma loved tasting food and learned to cook at a young age out of a love for food. She made crispy fried paneer for the first time and was thrilled. The idea came to her by chance, so she sat in class and told her classmate Rowan what she had learned to prepare in her home kitchen, then invited her to her home as a guest for dinner.

After school, Rowan agreed to go with her home without her mother's knowledge. They went together on a bus along Nasr City Road. After returning from school to Salma's house, they took the elevator. Salma was nervous because she was inviting a guest to her home for the first time, and she had never done that before.

As for Rowan, she seemed indifferent after she went with her, pretending to smile and hiding her feelings. They got out of the elevator after it stopped on the fourth floor, and Salma rang the doorbell. Her mother opened the door, seemingly surprised to find the guest with her daughter. Salma was busy preparing dinner with her colleague at a wooden dining table near the spacious living room.

Then they had dinner, and hours passed, and Rowan was in a state of joy. Suddenly, Rowan got up from her chair because her mother called her, so she had to go, and she wanted to return home quickly without delay. At that moment, Salma decided to ask her father's permission to accompany her friend and drop her off. Salma said:

- My colleague wanted to go home alone, but I would accompany her and go out of the neighborhood with her to help her get transportation.

Her father refused when he learned that Rowan lived in the popular Al-Marg neighborhood, known for its thugs. He said,

- No, but I will take you to your colleague Rowan's house to protect her at this late hour, and then you and my daughter will come back with me in my car.

Rawan, who looked upset, refused and told him angrily

- No, no, I'll go alone. I know how to depend on myself without fear.

Salma's father replied

- No, you can't go alone during this late curfew hour, but I want you to give me your mother's number. I'll call her and then accompany you for your safety. Please, please, agree to let me drive you.

But Rowan persisted, insisting that she wanted to go home alone and didn't want anyone to accompany her. This led to a dispute between her and Salma's father over this seemingly trivial matter.

After a long verbal argument and quarrel, and after Rowan's stubbornness, Salma's father called Rowan's mother to take her to her place, after forcing Rowan to tell him her mother's number. Rowan's mother simply agreed, and then they prepared to go downstairs to the house. Salma sat in the front seat, and in the back sat Rowan, who was very annoying. They reached Rowan's mother, who was wearing a headscarf, and smiled brightly in front of Salma's father and her daughter.

She appeared to be a simple, traditional woman with a classic appearance. She greeted Salma, took her daughter after thanking Salma's father, and met her daughter's colleague for the first time. She then left with her daughter, Rowan, and they arrived at their residence in the popular Al-Marj neighborhood.

At that moment, Salma returned home with her father. She entered her father's room, who was upset and angry about the situation between him and his daughter's classmate, due to Rowan's complete disrespect and disobedience.

Her father, after shouting angrily, said that he was extremely uncomfortable with Rowan's behavior, which is why he didn't want his daughter hanging out with her reckless classmate:

- Your classmate, Rowan, is not respectful at all. She refused to listen to me, claiming to be self-sufficient. She seemed to be hanging out with young men without her mother's knowledge, after she refused to give me a ride. But I warn you: Don't get close to Rowan. Stay away from her. You may never speak to or communicate with her again.

Salma said:

- But I didn't know if she was respectful or not. I never believed that Rowan was kind to me. What's the difference? I can't control her; she's free to live her own life.

Her father didn't respond to his daughter; he was already upset. He understood, as soon as he felt it, that his daughter's classmate didn't seem right to him.

Rowan's personality was respectable, not as Salma's father had thought. After this incident, Rowan distanced herself from Salma, which made Salma feel depressed. As time passed, Salma continued to talk and communicate with Rowan, and she did not abandon her. She had no other friends, as Rowan was the first classmate she had ever had in her school life. But at the same time, Rowan no longer trusted Salma, telling her nothing at all and keeping secrets from her. During that time, Salma learned, through gossip and rumors, that Rowan was experiencing problems in her life due to her father and mother's divorce.

Her mother was forced to work a government job to cover Rowan and her sister's expenses. She also learned that her classmate Rowan was having relationships with boys outside of school. Salma realized for the first time that her father was right about Rowan, so she decided not to continue their relationship and abandoned her after a long time. Rowan was a cunning person and became disrespected due to her reckless behavior, but she was very attached to her mother and considered her her closest friend. She loved being socially outgoing, creating trouble, and taking advantage of her friends.

She is extremely intelligent, observing people's actions and conversations, but pretending not to see them, spying on their words and actions. This means she knows everything about the lives of her close friends, their personalities, and their actions that no one else knows.

After the school party, Salma tried to talk to Rowan and give her one last chance, but she noticed that Rowan was looking at them without noticing that Salma was with her. At that moment, Salma felt uncomfortable and hated Rowan for never considering her a classmate, to the point that she couldn't stand Rowan's past actions toward her. Rowan enrolled in the same college as Salma, but in a different department, without ever speaking to her or communicating with her. Every time she saw her, Salma would exchange superficial greetings with her at social gatherings. Salma hated her for her intrusive manner.

Rowan was as cold as ever. On the other hand, in her second year, Salma had a classmate named Miriam. During that time, the problems in Salma's personal life increased due to psychological and social pressures, as she was subjected to bullying, rumors, and gossip from everyone.

Salma noticed that the friendship between Rowan and Miriam was beginning to strengthen, to the point where it was much closer than her own. For the first time, she felt jealous, as she was more attached to Miriam than to Rowan. All this time, Miriam hadn't been an ordinary person in Salma's life; she had accompanied her for a long time.

From high school through college, Salma allowed herself to be friends with Miriam, trusted her, and told her things about her private life that no one else knew.

But during that period, Miriam abandoned her, as Salma had changed and transformed into a depressed and pessimistic girl. This wasn't easy for Salma, as Miriam was supposed to be by her side during her difficult times. However, situations reveal people's true nature, not words. During difficult times, Miriam abandoned her.

You try to ignore the obvious truth, and continue to pretend that you are afraid of feeling lonely and withdrawn. It is difficult for no one to understand your feelings and thoughts as much as you would like. True friendship, at least once, is a feeling of security and love, but life is not fair when fake friendship defeats you in the good times, and in the hard times, there was no one to support Salma at all

She felt betrayed and treacherous, and her kind spirit was broken at that cruel moment. Salma became alone, and the feeling of betrayal and treachery was the worst feeling of her life. Rowan, her best friend, was stolen from her, and she became Miriam's constant friend, during school times, outings, and trips, without Salma, who always cried in secret.

She felt sad when times were tough, and angry when she wanted to take revenge on her close friends, but she couldn't. Her harsh feelings turned her into a strong, hypocritical person, revealing her true self to no one but her mother, to whom she was attached.

The harsh truth is that she's weak and lonely, with no one to support her. She acts like a tomboy and sometimes laughs with boys and girls, but she's not herself. Sometimes she becomes strange and suspicious. She's frighteningly smart, but at other times she's sociable and knows how to make new friends. For this reason, Rowan has always ignored her, because she wasn't a cheerful and fun girl like her due to her introverted personality. Rowan felt angry about confronting her bad friends. She doesn't know how to act right; on the contrary, her actions are wrong. However, she is sometimes good at dealing with people and has the skill to confront people with their different personalities. Rowan hopes to become a great mother when she gets married and has a child, and because of her love for children, she wants to get married.

She had acquaintances, relatives, her mother, and close friends who sometimes stood by her side, and she would communicate with them, so she was always smiling in front of others. Everyone loved her for her distinctive style and sharp intelligence. As for Rowan, she did not deserve Salma's friendship at all, and she distanced herself from her when she discovered that Salma was no good, at least as much as she was busy with the rumors, gossip, and backbiting in her circle of friends.

So, perhaps Rowan is like them, with her own world that everyone knows about, as if she was created to fit in with them at the right place and time. As the past few months passed after the holidays, at an educational center, mutual friends from the same school and university, among others, gathered to attend courses and achieve accomplishments.

There, Yasmine's mother sat next to Salma's mother and told her about Rowan's situation. She discovered that Rowan had taken her daughter Yasmine to a restaurant in Nasr City, and that Yasmine had paid the bill after being deceived by her, as Rowan only had a small amount of money due to her parents' divorce. Rowan's sister had left home after her marriage, and Salma was constantly upset about Rowan's situation.

Yasmine, another tall college colleague, had studied with her and was two years older than her. She had graduated from college before her. She had a younger brother, Abdulaziz, who was in the same class as Salma. Salma then fell into a trap because of Rowan, and decided to cut off all contact with Miriam and Rowan at the same time, due to her close friendship with Miriam.

Salma sent a video to her colleague, Myriam, via WhatsApp, informing her that she no longer wanted to continue her normal relationship with Myriam. Myriam was unaware of what Salma had done. Salma wanted to see if Myriam would send the video to Rawan, as she was certain that Myriam would betray her and break the precious trust between them. This also made Salma feel uncomfortable in her relationship with Myriam.

Miriam kept secrets from her, and one day she walked into the regular hall where she used to stand in the corridor hall leading to the stairs at the college. Suddenly, the two girls appeared side by side, meeting Miriam and Rowan at the same time. Rowan smiled strangely as she stood before her, then looked at Salma, who had been suspicious of them during those difficult times alone. Salma was sure that there was something suspicious between them without them telling her at all, as her feelings never lied to her, and she was right about the imaginary friendship:

- I was very sad because Miriam sent me the video message I had sent her. I watched the video, and Miriam told me in her messages, so I couldn't believe it at all and I was very sad. But I felt sorry for you, and I don't know how to say it, because it seems very difficult.

Salma went into a state of shock, her face filled with astonishment, and opened her mouth. For the first time since that painful moment, Rowan told her that she had lost her closest friend, Miriam, forever. Salma felt angry and hateful, and she never recovered from her shock. She reminisced about her beautiful and funny memories of the past with Miriam.

But suddenly, the most beautiful memories of her life faded away as if they had been drowned in quicksand; they vanished as if they had never existed. At that moment, Miriam's face became confused, and she looked at Rowan with a look in her eyes that betrayed her, signaling her to stop doing that so that Salma would never know anything. Rowan backed away after understanding Salma's look, and she felt a strange feeling.

She continued speaking and changed the subject, fearing for her after looking at Salma, who was surprised and stopped asking about her. She continued to rub salt into Salma's wounds, smiling a sly smile at her, and said,

- You fell into depression after feeling the sadness that was clearly evident on your face, didn't you?

Salma was in pain, and inside she was scarred by painful wounds, broken bones that could no longer be mended. She felt hurt by them, and she had never imagined that she would be placed in such a painful situation in front of them, that no one would support her at all because of Miriam's presence, and that she had become a victim of an imaginary friendship.

Her thoughts were conflicting: Why did she find herself alone in this difficult situation? She wanted to teach her a harsh lesson, but she couldn't find the right words and couldn't organize her response, so she became extremely distracted. Then, distracted by the unenviable situation, Salma imagined hurling her own poisonous words at her.

She shouted angrily after looking at her with a greedy look full of hatred and revenge:

- I hate you so much! You look disgusting all the time, trying to pretend to be happy, but you're just stupid all the time. When I found out negative things about you without you ever knowing that you're weak and a coward, you don't have the courage and strength to face me, and I can't stand you at all. You're like a hypocritical girl trying to get attention, but I really regret getting to know you. You don't deserve to be my colleague ever. Then you stole my colleague Miriam when you started asking about her affairs after you saw you two talking behind the wall. You are the worst people I have ever known. I regretted it, but regret is not worth it when it's too late, and I will destroy you both for everything. I know you are weak, you don't have the strength to confront me.

She laughed a loud, evil laugh after she said with a malicious smile to them, and looked at them with her evil eyes full of hatred and the flame of hatred and revenge. At that moment, Salma did not show any reaction, as she came to her senses after she was distracted by an imaginary situation that she created in her mind due to her lack of courage and confrontation. So she said to her with her normal smile that was devoid of her conflicting feelings:

- No, it's okay, nothing happened at all, and I thank you for that.

Then Salma turned into the Third party girl who was a classmate of Miriam and Rowan. She was no longer a classmate of either of them, until she became the outcast between Miriam and Rowan for the first time in that harsh situation. Salma left, deeply saddened all this time, after she returned home from college. She felt depressed for days and weeks, a difficult feeling without support from anyone around her among her family.

During that time, rumors about Salma spread, and people began talking about her and dealing with her. Salma was suspicious of them in a frightening and terrifying way from everyone, but her college classmates treated her with kindness for the first time, and she immediately understood the ridiculous rumors about her.

She felt sorry for the people who interfered in her life without any right to do so, considering them stupid without knowing the truth about what was inside them. She never confronted them honestly when she was sure about them, because they did not have the right to ask about her out of fear for her. Rowan knew Salma's private matters through her classmate Miriam. Salma was unsuccessful in her attempts to distance herself from Rowan and Miriam because of her attachment to Miriam in the same batch.

Wanting to help Rowan prepare for Miriam's birthday, Salma exposed her good nature for her colleague Miriam, making concessions to ensure her happiness. But Rowan went too far, making excuses for her poor financial situation. She called her on a video call after sending her a message, and Salma answered the call.

Rowan said, looking at Salma

- I don't have any money left this month to buy gifts But I'll pay for the portrait gift to create a picture of Miriam, me, you, and your friend Nawal in one shot. What do you think? I'll get the remaining money at the beginning of next month, but you can pay now, and I'll give you back the money later if you agree. Yes or no?

Salma said:

- Please, let me talk to my mother to see if she agrees or not. I'll get back to you shortly. Okay, Rowan?

Rowan understood and waited to hear the answer. Meanwhile, Salma entered the kitchen and told her mother about the money for her colleague Miriam's gift, asking her opinion. Her mother categorically refused, remembering what Yasmine's mother had told her about what had happened at the restaurant. She didn't want her daughter to be exposed to deception and lies in her life.

After asking her daughter about the matter, her mother said

- I don't agree to give her the money. You know very well that she was not being respectful at all when she stole money from Yasmine after deceiving her. Greedy Rowan took advantage of Yasmine, and I remembered when Yasmine's mother told me about that girl.

After hesitating and feeling confused, Salma said to her:

- I know about Rowan's theft, but I want to help her prepare a birthday gift for my colleague Miriam. She will help me at the portrait printing press to make Miriam happy.

Salma's mother categorically refused, so Salma gave in and went to her room, realizing that her mother was right about Rowan's constant greed for money. Rowan backed down due to Salma's hesitation and refusal, and then took advantage of her weakness and abandoned her once again, giving Mariam a gift but not Salma. The photos of Mariam with her mutual friends, Nada and Salma, are not all framed in one photo.

Rowan chose photos of her and Miriam in one picture, excluding Salma and Nada, after keeping secrets from them and paying for the photo herself without telling them. No one knows how she got the money, but the truth is, no one asked about it after Salma felt betrayed and betrayed once again, in order to exploit her own interests to please Miriam.

Salma looked shocked and angry when she learned about the gift Rowan had given Miriam. In July, Solita, the eldest sister in Miriam's simple family, got engaged. Solita was bespectacled, intelligent, and tall with long black hair. She wore a simple, beautiful dress and a kind smile.

However, Miriam couldn't invite Salma to her older sister's engagement party due to the lack of space, so she might invite her to her own wedding next time. Rowan had already gone to the engagement party with Miriam without Salma's knowledge, and Salma understood why Miriam hadn't invited her to Solita's engagement party, hoping to go to Solita's wedding soon.

Salma took the time to browse Facebook and saw a photo of Miriam with Solita, next to Rowan, who had appeared at Solita's engagement party. Salma looked shocked and disappointed; her spirit had been broken a thousand times in her life and she had suffered countless times because of them.

She discovered Rowan at Miriam's house, where her older sister's engagement party was being held. She was shocked by Miriam's actions, which had kept secrets from her the entire time. Salma had no idea why Miriam had lied to her and constantly pretended to be stupid in front of her, but she connected the events in her mind.

On the day of the graduation ceremony inside the club, Salma was very certain, and looked at her with suspicion, because she felt that Rowan was the one who caused the rumors to spread, and she had never forgiven her. Salma still hadn't forgiven Miriam and Rowan after two short years and long months, weeks and days. Salma asked Rowan with a scrutinizing look full of doubt and confusion, while Rowan was standing in the bathroom, busy examining her face in front of the mirror

- Who spread the rumors behind my back? And why did they do that to me?

Rowan hesitated, then changed the subject and walked out the door beside her, feeling confused and unwilling to tell her anything, no matter what happened. Rowan wasn't used to letting anyone tell her anything, unlike her close friend Miriam, who was able to tell her everything. She considered Miriam her closest friend, like her closest and most attached sister.

- Let's go into the hall together, Salma

Rowan said as she looked towards the doorway. She grabbed the door handle and pulled him into the large, crowded hall.

She went with her into the club hall, but she couldn't look Salma in the face at all, and then she ignored her presence. That was when Salma realized that her feeling was correct, without any evidence for her words, for the first time. She didn't know how to defend her rights in front of them because of them, after they had ruined her life and she no longer had any friends at all.

Salma was certain that Rowan had something to do with the rumors, and that she was the one responsible for destroying her life and her mental and psychological health, especially since Miriam had done the same thing, as she had participated in it. Salma could no longer trust Rowan and Miriam again, and she was unable to recover from the feelings of betrayal, treachery, and being stabbed behind her back. She could no longer bear the most difficult feelings at this time.

She was never able to make friends again. After the club's award ceremony, Rowan left Salma, who had remained attached to Miriam, more as a friend than a regular relationship, simply because the interest had run its course. Rowan even traveled with Miriam on summer trips without Salma, with mutual friends.

Several months after Miriam and Rowan graduated from college in different departments, while Salma dropped out, Rowan got engaged a few weeks after graduation, and Miriam began working at a pharmaceutical company in a factory. Rowan's friendship with Miriam continued even after graduation, when she abandoned Salma, who hadn't been with them since the graduation ceremony.

There are no pages for friendship. If it takes a dead end and an unknown path, those pages end. Friendship almost fell between life and death, imagining a blank page between illusion and deception. It no longer appeared as an image of friendship, but rather faded into the quicksand. In that sad moment, everything ended, between painful memories and neglected feelings.

In a single moment, I said goodbye to friendship, which almost became a deceptive reality that combine love, pain, and cruelty.

## Selfishness and Arrogance

*But self-abasement is merely selfishness in reverse.*

*He who acts with true humility is as far removed from humiliation as he is from arrogance.*

**Stephen Mitchell**

It's hard to talk about what's going on behind the scenes and hide your feelings. A person seeks honesty in the heart, free from deception or lies, far from the holes of exploitation, selfishness, and arrogance that may settle in the soul of a person who takes the rights of others without ever putting in any effort or effort. Simply put, it seems that life gives the bad what they want, unlike the good, because it isn't fair. If things don't go the way people want.

Sohaila Nour El-Din was a student who joined this college in the same class as Salma, having graduated from Madiha Qansouh School in Nasr City, where she had studied in the same class as Shorouk Ayman. An office worker named Bahaa had known Sohaila since she had sneaked out of school for fun and entertainment without anyone's knowledge.

When she enrolled in college, she met young men and women while still a high school student. Suhaila regularly visited Bahaa's office after school over the past few years, and they became close friends, their bond going beyond that of a normal student-employee relationship. Despite the age gap between them, their strong relationship developed into a deep friendship, and even more.

In his youth, Bahaa traveled to Germany and then returned to Cairo, but he was never honest. He always took advantage of others, even deceiving his office colleagues under the pretext of helping them, exploiting the students' lack of reading and writing skills. Bahaa, an accountant in student affairs

Married to a woman with young children, he lived with his wife and children in Rehab City. He wasn't just an ordinary man; he was intelligent and highly sociable, but his obsession with women and young girls was always his downfall.

However, he was prone to touching women and young women after he had become close to them, exploiting them to satisfy his ego. He was extremely knowledgeable about various topics, including mutual friends and influential people, as well as college affairs, girls, and friends' acquaintances outside of college, and their problems within his close circle of friends. He heard the rumors, gossip, backbiting, and lies woven around him by mutual friends who kept him updated on what was going on. He often accompanied them on activity trips and frequented upscale malls and cafes.

As for Sohaila, who lived in Imbaba, Giza, her family was composed of sisters. While she may appear perfect on the outside, the reality of her life was harsh and painful, as she lived in a city where poverty prevailed. She worked online selling makeup products to earn easy money, without focusing on her studies. As such, she relied on the help of Bahaa, an employee who continually supported her.

On the first day of school in the first year, in the first semester, Suhaila, who was very elegant, sat down after walking into the auditorium. There she recognized Salma, who was sitting next to her, looking excited and nervous at the same time. Salma focused on the professor who was explaining the subject matter to them, while she noticed that Suhaila, that beautiful and kind girl she had met for the first time, was sitting next to her. After the lecture ended, Suhaila hurried to Bahaa's office, the office clerk. Salma noticed that Suhaila would visit his office every time she left class, or immediately after, leaving the classrooms and heading towards him. In recent days, Suhaila spent long hours, even days and months, by his side over many years.

Suhaila met her classmates, including two of her old school friends, except for the other classmates. She asked them to help her prepare research and reports without her having to put in any effort or contribute to the work, and without any consideration for their feelings toward her. They allowed her to do so in the hope of earning reward.

As for Salma, she was kind-hearted and loved helping others, but she was naive when she agreed to help Suhaila, who wanted her to encourage an employee named Bahaa to help her cheat in her classes. Things took a turn for the worse, and Salma felt that Suhaila was forcing her and ordering her to prepare reports and research without realizing her fatigue or effort.

One day, Salma went to Baha's office and found Suhaila sitting there, acting arrogantly, without any regard for her feelings, only seeking her own interests. Baha'a was sitting in front of them, observing the situation. Salma stood in front of Suhaila and looked at her with a look filled with anger for her refusal to continue helping her, and said:

- You have to do it on your own, and you can try to prepare the research and reports in college yourself, as I will not help you anymore at all.

At the time, Salma was busy and suffering from psychological and mental stress due to her studies, and she became weak as a result of Suhaila's constant pressure to help her. As for Suhaila, she did not conduct herself well in her studies, trying to force her other classmates to write reports and research papers in her name without putting in any effort. This was a result of her upbringing in an old school full of corruption and neglect, which made her neglect her studies all the time.

Salma, looking exhausted and hopeless, stood in the college hall after crying in front of everyone. Her classmate, Maryam, approached her and hugged her to reassure her, comfort her, and support her, standing by her side. Suhaila was making fun of Salma and pressuring her all the time, as was an employee named Bahaa, who treated her badly after Suhaila told him about her.

Suhaila took the initiative to stir up emotions, and found everyone willing to help her when she asked, and they readily agreed for her sake. However, this only increased Salma's exhaustion, as she felt less than usual because of Suhaila. A few days later, Salma, standing after entering Bahaa's office, noticed that she had greeted him, only to find Bahaa looking at her with a look filled with hatred and resentment, cold and unfeeling. He treated her in the worst possible way, and Salma knew the reason for that nasty look: Suhaila had incited him against her, talking about her to Bahaa behind her back after she left his office.

Salma later learned that Baha' hated her and pretended to be kind to her all the time. She strangely noticed that Baha' treated Suhaila with exaggerated kindness, unlike the rest of their classmates. Salma felt discriminated against and treated unfairly, and the problems escalated.

As time passed, Suhaila never stopped her behavior, but continued to force Nada, their study group mate, to prepare assignments, research, and reports in her name. Nada agreed, out of her kind heart, believing she was earning a reward, especially since Suhaila could neither read nor write. She was lazy and hated studying intensely because of the corruption and neglect at her old school, which had affected her academic life.

Suhaila acted selfishly and arrogantly, treating everyone with condescension and caring more about herself than anyone else. She was mysterious and frighteningly intelligent, looking elegant and beautiful after applying makeup. During class, she would open her phone and browse the internet, preoccupied with it and not paying attention to the professors' explanations.

She would write her name on the attendance sheet every time, then ask the professors for permission to leave, unable to bear the long hours of lectures. After that, she would go to Bahaa's office to sit next to him before the end of the lectures. Every time she came to college, she hated the explanations of the material and didn't understand them. She never tried to study a day in her academic life. She was thinking only of herself all the time. As for Salma, she distanced herself completely from her over time.

After the previous months, Suhaila had hated Salma all this time and had never loved her at all. Salma couldn't understand why Suhaila hated her, and she couldn't find any reason for it, so she endured the pain and cruelty because of her. One day, Salma went to a training session and met mutual friends.

On her way home, she found a microbus. Suhaila happened to be accompanying her on the same route. Salma sat next to Suhaila in the back seat of the microbus. She was nervous, unable to bear her presence at all. Salma noticed that there were suspicious things about her colleagues, so she decided to test Suhaila by asking her a question. She looked at her and said:

- Tell me, did the students do something without my knowledge? Or is there a problem with their suspicious behavior that I don't know the reason for?

Suhaila was confused and took the opportunity to appear frank for the first time, without revealing the truth about her secrets or her life to Salma. Looking at Salma, who was sitting silently next to her, she answered

- Yes, they told me negative things about you, and rumors, gossip, and backbiting spread throughout the college because you seem boring, bad, and traditional, as some people see it.

Salma did not respond to Suhaila's words, but turned her face toward the window. Suhaila smiled at her after she had led her into the trap of lies and exploitation. Salma was deeply affected, and her life changed for the worse for the first time, without her ever trying to find out the truth about the rumors or standing up for herself. She sometimes became gloomy, as Suhaila told her that students were constantly spreading rumors about her, without her even knowing it.

Suhaila claimed that she never wished well for Salma, but was simply happy to see her considered boring and a failure. Suhaila had been intensely jealous of Salma for a long time. Salma was shocked to learn from Suhaila that the students, both male and female, were gossiping about her behind her back.

Salma felt a deep sense of sadness and pain, as she had never wronged anyone. She recently learned that Suhaila had never loved her, but rather had bet on her failure out of jealousy, especially after Salma refused to help her because of Suhaila's laziness and neglect of her college studies.

Suhaila was able to achieve exactly what she wanted. She was adept at exploiting Bahaa and her professors to succeed in her studies without ever failing, without putting in any effort or getting tired. She came to college just for fun and enjoyment.

Suhaila was cunning and intelligent, harshly influencing the lives of male and female students. She pretended to be stupid in front of her classmates, but she was adept at gathering information from them for her study group. She was adept at communicating with everyone at the college to stay informed, without putting any effort into her studies. She ignored hard work, as an employee named Bahaa helped her cheat on exams for four years. She would sit in the back of the classroom without the employees noticing, for fear of scandalizing her in front of the college president or the dean, in order to preserve her reputation and her job.

Bahaa treated her like his daughter or his best friend, never ignoring her presence. Thanks to him, she succeeded in all her subjects without tiring herself or straining her studies. As time passed, Suhaila continued to coerce Nada and issue orders to her, trying to force her to write reports and research papers under her name. Things piled up, and Salma became extremely annoyed with Suhaila, who continued to issue orders to her old schoolmates regarding assignments, research, and reports, without willingness to put in any effort. Suhaila remained a selfish, arrogant student, striving to succeed in her studies without regard for others' feelings.

Suhaila let the students down because of her selfishness, and she did nothing but sit by Baha's side for days, weeks, months, and even four years. Salma was different from the other girls, and Suhaila sometimes took advantage of her and pressured her out of jealousy. Suhaila felt jealous that Salma was so lucky to have such a simple life, without any worries at times. So, Suhaila tried to make her feel less than ordinary, ignoring her whenever she saw her and never speaking to her. Suhaila was a coward, unable to confront her honestly and bravely in front of everyone, so she pretended to be strong despite her weakness at times.

Suhaila met other students to help her, encouraging them to ensure her success. She was good at dealing with others, sometimes begging them. She broke up with her ex-boyfriend, was engaged to him twice, and then broke up permanently. Months later, she discovered that her ex-fiancé had become engaged to a fellow junior at the same college, just a few months after their breakup.

Suhaila felt jealous of her new fiancée, who was two years older than her. She appeared cold, but she harbored many negative feelings. Suhaila exploited the professors to succeed easily, pretending to be stupid in front of everyone, despite her constant cunning.

Suhaila, Nada, and Maryam graduated in their final four years, while Salma's life was shattered by Suhaila, who incited her and sometimes forced her to do things she didn't want to do. Salma was furious with Suhaila, not understanding why she hated her or her arrogant behavior, which prevented any communication between them.

Salma felt wronged, with no one to defend her, and she suffered every night from the pain and cruelty. Salma disappeared without a trace, remaining in her third year while others graduated, due to the harsh pressures in her life, which Suhaila easily destroyed.

After her third-year university results were announced, Salma went to college after much hesitation. She had tried several times to repeat this difficult year, while her classmates were applying. She cried for hours and ate her lunch alone in the college hall, without the company of her former classmates. She couldn't bear it all. Her classmates had graduated, leaving her alone with a new class she'd never known before. Unable to make new friends, she cut ties with everyone and blocked her classmates on WhatsApp and Facebook.

No one noticed her entrance, so she seemed ostracized and eccentric. Some considered her stupid and bad from their point of view because of society's rejection of her and the envy and hatred of others. Her future was ruined by the professors, whom she hated intensely, as they pressured her, increasing her suffering from family problems and psychological pressures. The harsh conditions in her third year were unbearable, and no one tolerated them easily.

Meanwhile, Suhaila found a new job a few days after graduating, but she struggled with it, starting one job and then quitting each time. She found her new job difficult for the first time, never accustomed to taking on responsibility. Suhaila helped Nada find a good job, communicating with her via WhatsApp.

A year later, Salma returned to her old college, eager to receive her graduation certificate. Suhaila stood in the corridor, laughing at Bahaa, who was talking to her outside his office door. Walking down the corridor, Salma saw Suhaila for the first time in a long time, and was surprised and shocked. She stepped back, not wanting to confront Suhaila Nour El-Din, then ran away from her and hid in a nearby building.

She sat on a chair, unable to bear the memories of her painful past. She put her hands to her face and cried tears streaming down her cheeks as she learned that Suhaila had gotten a new job and seemed happy in her life after graduation, unlike her, who was still completing her fourth year of studies, suffering from her difficult fate.

Salma felt that life simply wasn't fair. She suffered from pain and cruelty as she painfully revisited her dark past. During the following months, she spent her life preoccupied with her difficult studies, until she graduated after five years with difficulty. Her classmates disappeared and never contacted her again.

Salma continued to search for work, but failed several times. She and Suhaila never met again, their story ending without a single friendship. Salma erased Suhaila from her life forever, and five years after her graduation, the painful memories gradually faded.

## **Jealousy and Hatred**

*The enemy remains in the hearts of friends, and remember that selfishness breeds jealousy and ends relationships in discord*

**Michael Bassey Johnson**

It's easy to lie behind hatred, jealousy, and lies. One doesn't recognize that facial expressions may not be real when the truth turns out to be a lie. No one ever witnesses the painful truth, but it's hard for trauma and betrayal to end when friendship fades. Life's journey then becomes a lifetime of failed experiences. But life continues to learn from mistakes, and we learn a harsh lesson from which we can rise again. Life goes on without a friend, and we live alone, without support, in this bitter life that is no longer what it once was.

There was a girl named Shaimaa, who was overweight and had authentic Egyptian features. She was born in Beni Suef Governorate and was nicknamed Umm Hashim. Her father decided to change her real name to the name of his late mother in memory of her. However, she remained known as Umm Hashim, a nickname that did not suit her young age. At the beginning of middle school, Salma saw her for the first time. The young student, known as Umm Hashem, came with her father after transferring from her old school in Shubra to the new one. Salma met Shaimaa, and a friendship developed between them that lasted for years through middle and high school, and even extended into university Salma trusted Shaimaa blindly, without realizing what was going on inside her. She used to communicate with her, but she never felt comfortable in her company, without knowing why. Despite this, their friendship lasted temporarily

At the beginning of middle school, Salma approached Shaima and invited her to visit her home. Shaima agreed, and they spent some quality time together after lunch. Hours later, Salma wanted to take Shaima home. As Shaima boarded the bus, Salma couldn't feel comfortable with her, and she realized her feelings weren't lying. After deep thought, Salma decided to distance herself from her forever. She stopped talking to her and forgot about Shaima, who had become a chatterbox, constantly discussing her family affairs and trivial matters in her daily life.

Years passed as Salma approached the end of her high school years. On the day of the school graduation ceremony, Umm Hashem arrived with her younger brother. In the final days of high school, those moments marked the end of their friendship.

Shaimaa relied on cheating in her studies from elementary school through high school, continuing without effort or effort, unlike Salma, who sometimes helped her during exams. Shaimaa was unable to read or write and hated studying. She is the daughter of an officer working in the Shubra Police Department, and her mother, an ordinary housewife, moved from Beni Suef Governorate to Shubra. Shaimaa was the eldest of six younger siblings. Her grandmother died, and after the death of his first wife, her grandfather married an old woman described as evil.

Shaimaa enrolled in the same college where Salma studied, and Salma was surprised to find her standing there with old classmates from their previous school. Shaimaa had heard from a classmate named Miriam, whose sister was also studying at the college, that the college accepted students with an intermediate diploma.

When Shaimaa met Salma again, she seemed excited about the start of the school year. Salma tried to be superficial with her, having previously distanced herself from her. After class, Salma, Shaimaa, and Nada were sitting in the college hall. Shaimaa began to talk at length about domestic matters, as if she were not a student, but a young mother who knew how to manage household chores and help her younger siblings.

Nada shared details of her personal life, from her relatives to her home, makeup, household chores, clothes, and more. Shaimaa never cared about her studies, focusing on her work after receiving her degree without putting in any effort or effort.

Salma sat silently, not uttering a word. She could no longer stand Shaimaa's words and actions. She had never loved her; in fact, she had hated her all this time, to the point where she wished never to see her again. One day, Shaimaa had a fight in the college hall because Salma refused to help her prepare the research and reports that needed to be submitted to the professor.

Shaimaa wasn't satisfied with that; she exploded with anger until her heart became like stone, filled with hatred and resentment. Blinded by jealousy and envy, she tried to force Salma to help her against her will. Salma vehemently refused, insisting on not offering her help, as she was not obligated to write reports and research in Shaimaa's name. Salma realized that she had made the right decision by refusing.

Shaimaa was lazy, neglecting commitment and responsibilities at college, and caring only about housework. It would have been better for her to drop out of college altogether, as she was unable to continue her studies. Salma wished to cut off her relationship with Shaimaa completely and no longer trusted her at all. Salma ignored Shaimaa's work because of her exhaustion and the great effort that almost exceeded her capacity.

One time, Shaima stood in front of Salma, shouting at her loudly in front of her college classmates, looking at her angrily. Salma, however, sat in the hall, acting coldly and ignoring her. Salma realized that Shaima was a frivolous and sometimes cunning girl, who always denied it and pretended to be kind.

Shaimaa caused Salma to fall into a state of depression, crying, and panic attacks before she left college, because she wanted Salma to carry out college chores for her. But Salma didn't care, seeing Shaimaa as selfish, thinking only of herself and her family without regard for the feelings of others.

And what was inside her was hurting her because of that, in the presence of Rawan, Nada and Mariam, who witnessed Shaima's screams without defending Salma, who entered a strange and astonishing state, so she felt her soul breaking inside her heart, and her mind was about to explode with madness and anger. She wanted to take revenge on her, so she felt disturbed and angry because she was unable to defend herself, and she was never able to take her rights in front of the other students because of her good heart.

So she regretted it the rest of the time. Shaima stopped arguing with her, then Salma ran out of the college in a panic attack, and cried on the sidewalk of the park near the college, and put her hands over her face so that no one would notice her face swollen from fatigue, suffering, and pain.

As the long hours passed amidst the noisy atmosphere of the public road, pedestrians on public buses almost noticed her for a moment without her ever making a mistake. She worked hard in her studies; she deserved to succeed, and her efforts would not be wasted just because she had an argument with Shaima in the college hall.

This was because Umm Hashim treated her like a slave to her own success, without even thinking about Salma's hardship. She was selfish by nature, sometimes thinking only of herself instead of focusing on her university studies.

She doesn't like college, so it's okay for her to continue trying to cheat in the hope of success without putting in any effort or getting tired.

Shaima was cold-hearted, never feeling any sympathy for Salma, as she was skilled at hiding her own feelings and never made anything clear. This made her cunning, exploiting the people around her for her own gain without expecting anything in return, as she was indifferent to Salma's feelings and ignored them without fearing for them.

Salma was angry because she had nothing to do with Shaima's business in the first place. Shaima never stopped talking about her family, relatives, and sisters with them. It was not Salma's fault if no one defended her at all. She did nothing but stay away from her, but Shaima approached her for her own good because of college work.

Shaima was responsible for her life's mistakes due to her laziness and lack of effort in college work, and she refused to take responsibility for her actions at college. Salma had to rely on herself, not Shaima, because she had exerted so much effort on her own the entire time.

Salma endured many difficult times and endured tremendous pressures that took a toll on her psychological well-being. Shaima refused to admit anything at all and denied everything, as she was unable to confront everyone and was weak and selfish by nature. She hated and despised Salma, and felt extremely jealous of her throughout this time. She never admitted her mistakes in her life, and she never apologized to Salma. Shaima changed a lot after entering college, and she was no longer the same as she used to be. She began gossiping with her classmate Nada in the college hall after or before class, as usual.

We began our second year after our classmates and she had both succeeded. We split into a specialized group consisting of two male classmates and four female students. Shaima began to hate Salma for the first time, and she was no longer kind to her because of her pettiness and jealousy. She began to despise her and talk about her with her fellow students, Nada and Mariam, behind her back, without Salma even knowing. Salma couldn't understand this and was shocked, as she hadn't done anything to hurt her. Perhaps she had never noticed, as she didn't understand why Shaima hated or despised her so much, to the point that she treated her like she was the stupid one.

Salma discovered that Shaimaa was jealous of her, and heard about it through their mutual friend, Nada. She never imagined that Shaimaa had been jealous of her for three years at college. She discovered shocking things about her and felt disappointed and betrayed by her, as she had stabbed her in the back for three years without realizing anything. She learned of Shaimaa's negative traits when she was a sophomore, and the friendship and trust were gone. Salma distanced herself from her, and in her third year, Salma changed and completely ignored her, never speaking to her again. Shaima was bossy and exploited others to achieve her own success. Shaima was emotional and lazy, and failed to complete assignments and reports due to her busy schedules at home and her wedding. She tried to force and beg our fellow students to write research papers by adding them to their names, using excuses like sometimes her laptop broke, making up other excuses, or claiming to be busy.

She recalls one time that Umm Hashim couldn't use her email or deliver letters to her professors, so she begged Salma to help her. Salma agreed, and they went to the computer room at a store near the college. Salma helped her in the store and sat on the chair.

Salma seemed engrossed in front of the computer, while Umm Hashem stood beside her, looking deeply into her face with a fiery gaze filled with envy and hatred. Salma had never felt comfortable around her and regretted helping her. Salma had already noticed that strange look and immediately understood the strangeness of Umm Hashem's actions.

After the help was over, Salma got up and sent the message to the professors on behalf of Shaimaa via her personal email. Shaimaa thanked Salma for her help, as Shaimaa was about to get married after getting engaged to a disrespectful and foolish man, one of her distant relatives from the village of Beni Suef, during the holidays when we were in the second year.

Salma realized that Umm Hashim was exploiting anyone to marry them without love, in the style of a wedding salon. She had broken off her previous engagement to her former neighbor, then married during her first semester break of her junior year. After studying in her second semester, she gave birth to a child.

So, Shaimaa was lazy because of her busy schedule at home with her family, and she aspired to earn a university degree based on her success without any effort or fatigue. But Shaimaa was never smart, not even for a moment. She was still fundamentally illiterate and ignorant, and she couldn't write words like ordinary people, thanks to simple cheating.

What a nasty person, unbearably plump, and demon-like in appearance. Umm Hashim is a coward, no matter how much she denies the truth about Salma all this time, or hides the facts inside. Salma finds it difficult to understand Umm Hashim because she cannot reconcile her studies with her married life, as she is busy after her marriage. And every time, she leaves as soon as the lectures are over.

She no longer remembered anything from her time at school, and I still considered her the worst classmate I had ever known. I truly regretted it all, and after the end of her third year, Salma suddenly failed, and people's true natures were revealed. I was shocked by the reactions of her college colleagues. They hated and disliked her, sometimes talked about her behind her back, and walked away without her doing anything but remain silent and cry. Salma faced strange behavior in front of everyone because of their pity for her. For the first time, they began to treat her kindly, but with sad, fake looks.

They thought they could know everything about her, but the truth is they couldn't understand her any more than they did before, and they didn't even know everything about her difficult life.

As for Umm Hashim, she seemed happy and relieved, as if she had gotten rid of her. She felt jealous of her in everything, all the time, and discovered that Salma had failed in her studies, but she pretended to be sad, contrary to her hidden motives and bad intentions in front of everyone. Salma was on the verge of suicide or dying from the deepest sadness and grief of her life. She cried every night, not understanding the reason for this terrifying upheaval in her life. She wondered: Why was this happening to her? Had she made mistakes without realizing it, and paid a heavy price through cruelty, intolerance, quarrels, and alienation?

She became the only one who went to a place far away from everyone, hiding her existence, and decided to swear never to forgive anyone who had corrupted her and distorted her soul. She cut off her ties with them forever, erasing their existence from her life in a single moment, especially the doctor during her studies, who destroyed her soul and made her feel like a failure in her own eyes. She lost her self-confidence because of everyone who belittled her.

In their eyes, she was less than ordinary. She lost everything: her friends and her studies for the first time. Her life was turned upside down. Everyone destroyed her, envied her, distorted her innocent soul, corrupted her, and abandoned her. They never remembered her again. That cruel moment broke her heart.

Salma became pessimistic and sad, and her beautiful life turned dull and dark. She was never with them again. A year and a half later, Salma appeared changed, her features showing sadness. She discovered that her other friends had let her down again, breaking her spirit once again.

One day, as she was walking toward the corridor leading to the college hall, Umm Hashim was standing in the hall waving and greeting her. She waved toward Salma, looked at her, called her over, and motioned for her to sit next to her. Salma noticed her movements but, for the first time, ignored her presence, as if nothing had happened. She moved a short distance away and stood behind the college hall so she wouldn't see her among the crowds again. She felt pain and cruelty, and she herself became cruel.

Umm Hashim hated that Shaima was still happy about Salma's failure. She had been jealous of her for a long time. Salma's life had been turned upside down by the envy and hatred of everyone around her. After just one year in the fourth grade, Salma emerged strong and rose again. She decided to confront everyone. She resumed her studies after a one-year hiatus, and for the first time, Salma was no longer weak. She began to defeat everyone around her who constantly tried to discourage her, but she simply ignored them.

As for Shaimaa, she failed her fourth year and became deeply indebted to her husband, who began losing money and no longer earned anything at all. Due to her difficult financial circumstances, Shaimaa was forced to work as a seamstress in a factory near her marital home. As for her husband, he became unemployed after being fired from his job.

On the first day of fourth-year school, Salma was sitting on the steps outside the lecture hall, feeling nervous and anxious when Shaima, her old classmate, appeared. Her memories came back like a tape passing through her life, between her school and her old classmate. Shaima returned, having gained weight, and sat on the steps next to Salma, but Salma ignored her presence, not paying her any attention.

Salma contacted her classmates from the younger batch, never realizing that she would confront Shaimaa in front of her after the lecture. Looking at her deeply, she said to Umm Hashem, who was sitting next to her:

- I want to talk to you about something important after the lecture.

Shaima became nervous, looked at her, and after a long silence said

- Okay, I'll wait for you after the lecture.

The lecture ended, and before Shaimaa could leave for Bahaa's office to wait for Salma, a long time passed because Salma, unlike Shaimaa, didn't finish her lectures within a few hours. But Shaimaa couldn't bear to wait any longer, so she left the college because she was busy with her housework. After her lecture, Salma went to Bahaa's office, where he told her that Shaimaa wasn't there because she was busy with housework and that she had to take care of her child at home. Salma understood the situation, but she was annoyed with Shaimaa, as she was absolutely certain that Shaimaa wouldn't tolerate a confrontation.

A week later, Shaima entered the hall while Salma was sitting in the college lounge. Salma stood up and walked over to her. Shaima said,

- I'm very sorry if I couldn't wait because I was busy with my child. I obviously have to take care of him, and I couldn't bear it anymore after several hours had passed, so I went home.

Salma replied

- It's okay, Shaima. I have no problem at all.

Salma understood the situation, was patient with her, and tried to appear strong. Salma was seeking to forgive Shaima for the first time, so she gave her a second chance. She tried to help her with college matters, many school assignments, and other things. But she never imagined that her kind heart would forgive her so easily.

Shaimaa was busy with her housework most of the time, and she would communicate with Salma to find out about college news, homework, reports, transcripts, bills related to her tuition fees, and other college matters. They continued to communicate

After several months, Salma decided to test Shaimaa, as she wanted her to help her with computer work. However, Shaimaa made up repeated excuses, and her true identity was revealed when Salma confronted her via WhatsApp messages. Salma told her, after she sent a message addressed to her

- I helped you with everything related to your studies, but you never helped me. I never hesitate to help you because I wanted to earn reward for God.

Shaimaa replied:

- No, believe me. I'm busy with my housework and have more responsibilities at home, and I haven't been able to focus on my studies, Salma. I agree to help you. We should agree and then meet at college so I can help you. I have no problem with that.

But Salma blocked her after she grew tired of her repeated flimsy excuses. She regretted ever allowing herself to help Shaimaa without asking for anything in return. Salma hoped that Shaimaa would be honest and talk to her, not lie to her. Shaima tried to contact her, but she couldn't get a response after Salma blocked her. Unaware that Salma had blocked her, Shaima asked her mutual friends in the WhatsApp group about Salma and found her message.

On Christmas Day, Shaima arrived at the college door and found Salma sitting on a chair. Salma had arrived early at the college and waited for her younger classmates to arrive.

Salma noticed Shaima's presence, but she ignored her and turned away. Shaima approached, looking confused and extremely curious about Salma, who was ignoring her. Salma stood up from her chair, and Shaima stood in front of her. She looked at her anxiously, and asked her with a puzzled look:

- I sent you messages, but you never replied. Is there a problem?

Shaimaa was searching for answers to her curious questions, but she could never love Salma, viewing her as a self-interested person who pursued her desires. Shaimaa wanted to know what was going on in Salma's mind, but she wouldn't tell her, thinking she could hide the secrets of her intentions and hidden intentions. Shaimaa had constantly deceived Salma and everyone around her with her intelligence. Salma, after appearing strong for the first time, admitted the truth of the difficult situation:

- Yes, but I don't want to communicate with you anymore. I certainly don't want to talk to you anymore.
- Why?

Shaimaa replied, standing bewildered in front of Salma, who looked firm and stern.

- I didn't do anything!

She continued, looked at her, and said:

- Our younger colleagues told you that I was bad and did something to hurt you, didn't they?

Salma turned her face and looked away, annoyed by Shaima's words, as she couldn't figure out what was going on in her mind. She no longer wanted to continue her friendship with Shaima, and she was tired of Shaima's constant lying.

Salma said, her face sad as she looked at Shaima.

- Do you really not remember at all what you did in third year? Your bad behavior toward me all this time, for five years now?

Shaima became confused, and signs of distress were evident on her features. She couldn't confess, but she gradually began to remember things from the past. Salma was stuck in her painful past, filled with pain, suffering, and sadness. Shaima, disturbed and shocked, said,

- But I couldn't remember everything I did to you. I forgot the past because I was busy, and it never crossed my mind.

Salma was astonished by what Shaimaa said. For the first time, she couldn't differentiate between what was true and what was false. She tried to read her body language, trying to understand her, but she couldn't find an answer. She felt that she had perhaps overthought her issues alone all this time, without anyone thinking about her. She found herself in a difficult situation in her life for the first time, and she seemed absent-minded after revisiting their past memories filled with sorrow, sadness, problems, deception, and betrayal.

Salma frowned after looking at her,

- You talked to your friends behind my back and made me feel like a slave, forcing me to do things I didn't want to do for you. You hated me all this time, you felt jealous and spiteful, and then you stabbed me behind my back because you fabricated lies about me.

Shaima was shocked by Salma's words and understood what she had said, but she never tried to correct her, as she would have lied and would never have confessed to her. Salma held herself together tightly and tried to defend her lost right. She continued her words after looking at her with a look filled with hatred:

- Then you screamed at me in front of our old colleagues, breaking my heart and my spirit. There will never be a friendship between us as long as I'm alive. You destroyed me, envied me, and did everything to hurt me. You spread rumors, gossip, slander, and lies, twisting my image to make me look bad in front of people. All of those things are baseless, and your words are full of lies. And then you told everyone that I never helped you, that I had become arrogant. You told them everything, didn't you?

Shaima denied what Salma said and refused to agree with her frank opinion, appearing cowardly and weak. She would never confront her, because Salma had revealed her true nature, and Shaima had faced painful truths that she would always run away from, and would never be able to defend herself. Shaima then said, after looking at her with a look full of fear:

- I will never believe that I did these things in the past.

She continued, denying the truth of the situation:

- No, I didn't do anything at all. You misjudged me, and no one ever told me anything, Salma. I forgot everything, so I didn't remember, of course, because I was busy at home and spent all my time there. But I want us to forgive each other and reconcile our relationship. What should I do, Salma?

Salma was shocked by Shaima's denial, after she played the victim herself without anything happening. Salma tried to take her rights and defend herself, to deserve to live victoriously in the face of toxic and hurtful people like Shaima, who build fake relationships called Toxic relationships. Salma, after appearing tough and strong in front of her, said, and she was determined to accept the apology to be free from her painful past:

- Okay, I want you to apologize to me for all the bad things you've done all this time, so I can get some relief from everything. But I know how weak you appear, and it shows in your body language, because you'll never be able to confess to me.

After she refused, Shaima responded, appearing weak and hesitant in front of her:

- No, I will never apologize. I couldn't do anything to hurt you, Salma.

Salma replied:

- Well, I don't want us to contact each other or ever meet again. I've hated you all this time. Our painful memories, our fake friendship, and our past are over. It's all over. Goodbye, Shaima.

Shaimaa replied:

- Okay, Salma.

Salma cut off her relationship with Shaimaa after confronting her and arguing with her at the beginning of the new year. Salma discovered that Shaimaa was skilled at the art of denial and lying, and she confirmed this correctly after confronting her. Salma became stronger after confronting her for the first time, and she tried to be honest with everyone around her constantly, and she rarely found the art of pretense. Then Salma turned around after she left her for the first time She walked through the music building, and their relationship was over for good. Salma sat on the stairs, seemingly absent-minded, and never communicated with Shaima again. Salma was determined to end their relationship for life, and rid herself of a heavy burden that had been shackled to her life. After her relationship was finally over, she felt content, and her condition improved slightly.

Shaima was furious, and Salma cut ties with her permanently. Salma sat on the chair after walking through the college hall, and Shaima decided to spread false rumors, lies, backbiting, and gossiping about Salma. And that's exactly what happened. Salma moved forward with her life, forgetting her entire past, and moving on without looking back. She never met her friends again after she stopped communicating with them, and she was content with herself, needing no friends at all.

Ever since Salma broke up with Shaimaa, Shaimaa has spread lies, backbites, and gossip about Salma, telling all her classmates about her, out of a desire for revenge. Her classmates have been distancing themselves from Salma all the time, while Shaimaa has made many friends at the college.

## Interest and exploitation

*The evil in the world always comes from ignorance, and good intentions can be as harmful as hatred if they lack understanding.*

*Albert Camus*

Salma, a senior student at the Faculty of Computers and Information at Ain Shams University, endured years of pain, fatigue, effort, and hard work, dreaming of becoming a programmer. She lived a difficult life, filled with disappointments from her friends, from her school days through her university years. She persevered on her own, believing in her spirit, until she made mistakes against others and came to regret her wrongdoings, for which she paid the price. She wasn't at fault for choosing poorly with her mutual friends, but she learned from her mistakes and became a strong, fighting hero, moving beyond her past to her present.

With the announcement of the dates for the first day of the university year, Salma went to the music building alone on the first day of school, without her old classmates, to attend the lecture. She sat in the auditorium in front of the lecturer, in the early morning hours.

After the lecture was over, Salma was used to being in the company of her classmates, even though she didn't want to be in their company, as she didn't know how to be self-sufficient in college without them.

Meanwhile, her younger classmates from her current batch were excited, chatting, laughing, and talking in the front auditorium, not focusing on the doctor's explanation. Unlike Salma, who was lonely and sad, she watched them and grieved over the loss of her old classmates, who were now busy with their own lives—work, engagement, and marriage—while she was still just starting out.

Salma returned to her fourth year after successfully completing her third year, with the same class she had studied with the previous year, and her younger classmates who were only a year or two younger than her. However, she did not meet two girls from another school among her group of nine boys and girls.

She had known some of these people since her old school years ago, but she had never liked her younger classmates and had never been able to trust or accept them for a single moment. She had become different from them, perhaps because she carried some psychological and mental complexes, but she had matured and become strong, not just a strange girl, but deeply sensitive.

On the night of the first day of the college year, Salma felt anxious and nervous, and she didn't sleep well due to her fear of the unknown future. But she learned to be patient, believing that she would gradually overcome the difficulties she faced. She wasn't satisfied with the current situation, and she spent one day each week with her classmates at a specific school for practical training.

At one point, the beautiful girl, Reem Khaled, appeared, sitting with her friends. Reem noticed that Salma was absent-minded and sad, standing by the corridor in the school hall below, silent, far away from everyone. Reem approached her and looked at her with a look full of curiosity.

Reem Khaled asked her, standing in front of her:

- Why do you always stay alone? I want you to join us in the classroom and be part of our group of friends, Salma.

Salma frowned and looked at Reem with an indifferent expression,

- I like to be alone and distant. I don't want to be with you at all. I'm not with you, and I won't be friends with our younger colleagues.

Salma's answer piqued Reem's curiosity, and she tried to understand the reason for her frown. Reem wasn't close to Salma at all, and their relationship was merely a superficial study companion. Reem continued, looking at Salma, who seemed calm:

- What's wrong, Salma? I want to know, because I'm talking to you.

Salma didn't respond to Reem's words. Instead, she turned her face down to the side of the corridor, ignoring her as if she weren't even there. She didn't say a word, just remained silent. Reem left her alone outside the classroom and went inside to sit with her friends.

Reem Khaled, the daughter of a businessman, was a woman of perfect appearance, with a radiant face and light green eyes, adorned with a narrow smile that concealed hidden flaws. She seemed to be hiding dark secrets, and her soul did not reflect the beauty of her outward appearance. She was not as honest or kind as some people think.

Her father owns a well-known company, and her older brothers didn't complete their education beyond middle school, in a wealthy family. Her mother, on the other hand, was like her, a kindred spirit. She married at an early age and dropped out of school, as did Reem, who married Hussein in her second year of university.

A graphic designer at the National Bank of Egypt, Hussein is an expert and skilled in Photoshop design. He is intelligent and practical and lives with his wife in the Fifth Settlement. They have a two-and-a-half-year-old son, Younis.

Reem frequently visited her parents' home in the Shubra neighborhood, but she was unable to read or write fluently, having passed her schoolwork by cheating, from elementary school until she entered college. Unlike her husband, he mastered reading and writing thanks to his religious, veiled mother, who raised him with knowledge, morals, and the Islamic faith. Hussein graduated from the Faculty of Engineering at Helwan University.

After a few weeks, the students were divided into two groups, the first and the second, based on the number of students in their college course. The girls were grouped with the group leader after being categorized by mutual friends and according to her personal interests. After the lecture, the group leader made her decisions based on her mood, without regard for the feelings of others.

She stood in front of her colleagues in the long corridor, with Khaled and three other young men in tow. She found Salma next to Reem in the second group, and she was upset because she didn't want to work with Khaled and the other three young men.

Salma had long known that they didn't care about working hard in their classes, and neither did Reem, who didn't understand how to work in a team or put effort into assignments. But Salma chose to work on the assignments alone in secret, without her classmates knowing.

Reem objected to being in the second group, believing Salma was ignorant and incompetent in front of her colleagues. The leader of the first group ignored her and overheard Reem's objection, claiming there was no vacancy. Looking at Reem, who seemed angry at Salma's presence, the group leader said,

- Salma is good at working on the subject assignments on her own, and she will help you all together, Reem.

Reem replied sharply,

- No, I absolutely won't agree! She's not good at using a computer. She told me so herself when I asked her, and she told me she's not skilled. I want to be a member of the first group with you!

The group leader refused Reem's request several times, unwilling to agree based on her own personal interests. Reem, who appeared angry with a sinister expression, surrendered to Salma, who appeared cold, silent, and ignored her. Salma realized that her colleagues were useless and immature in their thinking.

Salma finished her solo work and then hurried home, wanting to finish her assignment early. She registered her assignments under her own name without mentioning her colleagues' names, pretending to lack the skills to appear ignorant of the subject's tasks. She hid some things from them for fear of envy, which had previously nearly ruined her future after her inspiring story was published in an online and print newspaper, bringing her fame on social media.

On assessment day in the computer lab, Salma, along with Reem and three other students, pretended to the professors that she hadn't contributed to the group work and had only completed her individual work. Appearing extremely nervous, Salma sat next to the other group, hiding her individual work from her younger classmates, fearing that they might misjudge her or think she was selfish and arrogant.

The first group received evaluation grades, while the second group received no grades, as its members did not understand the value of teamwork. The first group, which consisted only of female students, looked at Reem, who collapsed, and Salma, accompanied by the three young men, with looks filled with pity and contempt for their failure to receive grades.

Reem begged the professor in front of everyone to give her a second chance for re-evaluation, but the professor refused. Reem collapsed, appearing exhausted and in a pitiful state. Finding herself the target of contempt and pity from her classmates, she went down the hall and left the lounge. She felt ashamed of herself and burst into tears on the college lounge floor. Salma ran after Reem, quickly descending the stairs, and stood beside her, trying to comfort her. But Reem, who was collapsing, screamed in pain in front of Salma, who seemed worried about her. For the first time, Reem directed hurtful words at her, saying in a loud, angry voice, addressing Salma, who seemed shocked by her reaction:

- Get away from me! I don't want you around me! I don't want to work with you. You're so ignorant and stupid, you'll never do the job well no matter what. You're the reason we don't get grades!

Salma was hurt by what Reem had said, and that day turned into the worst day of her life. Reem moved away, walked a short distance, continued crying, and then stopped far away. Meanwhile, employee Bahaa appeared, running towards Reem after hearing from her colleagues what had happened. He tried to console her and support her for not receiving the evaluation grades.

They talked for over an hour, and the conversation turned to Salma, who was standing in the middle of the hall, devastated and shocked by Reem's harsh words. Salma burst into tears, feeling the injustice and her spirit broken, as there was no one to support her.

Bahaa suggested that Reem become friends with Salma, who had recently lost friends and felt lonely after being abandoned by her old colleagues. Reem agreed. At that moment, Salma felt remorseful, realizing her mistake in hiding her solo work. She also realized that she should have worked with the group, but she was convinced that the other group members were not cooperating in group work. The group leader was doing the group work alone without their participation.

After that difficult day, Salma returned home and recounted the details of her difficult day to her kind mother. Her mother was shocked and realized that her daughter had made a mistake by hiding the individual work, which put her at risk of a huge loss, as it could have resulted in the group not receiving assessment grades. Salma feared that her classmates would receive grades based on her hard work and effort, without their input.

A few days later, Salma decided to collaborate with her classmates and help them. She created a WhatsApp group with Reem Khaled and the three students, collecting each individual's individual work files to turn them into a group project. However, Salma made a mistake in dividing the tasks, as she did not distribute the textbook units fairly to each individual. Each student was supposed to be assigned three units of sixth-grade lessons for the first semester, but she chose one lesson for two of the three students because there weren't enough lessons for everyone.

Salma stood before her classmates, who accused her of making mistakes after she made a bad impression, appearing ignorant and stupid in an embarrassing situation. The group leader seemed annoyed with her and blamed her for an unintentional mistake. Salma was brokenhearted, expecting someone to defend her, but they were unwilling to do so.

She descended the stairs, pausing before unlocking her phone to answer a request from Mohammed Hussein, one of her classmates, who had asked her to look for a school book. Mohammed remained busy browsing through Salma's phone while she stood in front of Reem. Mohammed didn't want to choose a complicated, detailed school book; he wanted something easy and light.

Salma found an alternative solution, choosing the same textbook for the second semester, dividing each of the three students into three units for the first semester. However, the group work file contained disorganized errors due to the duplication of work by each of the three students, who were mutual friends from their old school.

On a holiday, Salma sat alone in a café near the college, working on the final edits for the group's project from eight in the morning until noon. She drank Nescafé, a requirement for sitting in the café across from the college. Reem was late arriving at the café and ignored Salma's help, contenting herself with sitting next to her and talking to her without contributing anything.

Salma took her previous solo work and added it to the group work compilation. She was sitting, concentrating on the laptop in front of Reem, who looked bored. Reem, who had supported Salma in the past, hadn't put in much effort. Salma found her old solo work to be poor because Reem hadn't worked on her solo work herself; her cousin had helped her.

Group work became Salma's sole responsibility due to Reem's weak skills. Salma struggled with her repeated attempts to edit the group work alone throughout the day, and felt the need for her colleagues to be with her. She asked them to come to a café near the college to help her write and edit the file, after agreeing to collaborate as a group, as the professors were demanding frequent revisions to the work.

The next day, Salma, along with the second group, Reem Khaled, and the three other students, received the evaluation grade, thanks to her hard work and effort. However, Salma had absolutely no desire to be with Reem because of the previous situation, and she hated her intensely. On the day of the evaluation for the three subjects, the truth of Salma's superiority was revealed, as she received a good grade in all three subjects.

Salma's young classmates were amazed by her good grades. They were shocked and astonished, as they could not believe her success. They thought she was stupid, ignorant, weird, and conventional. Reem felt jealous and seemed surprised and incredulous at Salma's accomplishment, as she, like them, had believed the negative descriptions directed at her.

A few days later, Salma was worried about the difficulty of downloading Cinema 4D onto her laptop, due to its large size, which did not fit in the available storage space, especially with the arrival of a new assignment for another subject. She asked her colleague, Mohamed Tarek, to download it, but he was also unsuccessful due to the limited space. Reem noticed Salma's conversation with Mohamed and said to her, while Salma was feeling anxious and scared:

- Maybe I can lend you my laptop. It doesn't work on Cinema 4D.

Salma thanked her, relieved to find a solution. But Reem, in fact, had taken advantage of Salma for the first time, realizing that she was skilled and excellent at college work. Salma worked hard on Cinema 4D using Reem's home computer, not only to complete her solo work but also to prepare a solo for Reem, who had asked her to do it because she wasn't proficient with the program.

Salma appeared, as usual, in mismatched clothes, looking untidy, as she had never cared about looking perfect. Reem criticized her appearance, and Salma grew tired of her comments. Salma tested Reem to see if she was a good friend, observing her body language and actions. She realized that Reem was nothing but a bad friend, a hypocrite, who didn't care about comforting Salma or her hurt feelings.

Rahma Refaat noticed that Salma and Reem had become closer than before, so she suspected that there was something strange going on between them secretly. They were inseparable on certain days, both inside and outside of college. Rahma decided to ask Reem why she always seemed to be closer to Salma instead of her. She felt that Reem had changed and was no longer the same, and that she was hiding secrets. Reem and Rahma quarreled in the college office over Salma, who was a third party in the conflict. Salma sat silently, watching the fight, feeling guilty and upset, as she had never been like either of them. Rahma then asked Salma for help with the Cinema 4D program.

Salma refused to help Rahma, as Reem forbade her from doing so due to her laziness, and Reem tried to control and dominate her. Salma deeply regretted not helping Rahma, and felt she had become selfish because of her attachment to Reem. As for Rahma Refaat, she was Reem's friend, or rather, she wasn't close to her, as she studied with her at Madiha Qansouh School in Nasr City.

Rahma lives in a working-class neighborhood near the Ghamra metro station, where some thugs live. However, she is honest and kind-hearted, well-liked by others, and a strong believer in her Islamic faith, maintaining her prayers. Her father is religious, and her mother wears the niqab. She and her two older and younger sisters belong to a very conservative family. Rahma has been engaged for four years to Islam, her boyfriend, whom she met at school.

Salma and Reem Khaled secretly finished their work, without anyone knowing. On Wednesday, during practical training at a school near the college, and Thursday before the practical exam for the Cinema 4D program, Saeed and Mohamed Hussein, two of the three young men, were standing outside the classroom. They noticed Salma's agitation and asked her to enter the classroom. Salma became confused and then asked to accompany Reem Khaled, who was standing in front of her. She went with her and entered the classroom with her.

Saeed said to Salma, who seemed confused and hesitant:

- You're good at using Cinema 4D, aren't you? Tomorrow is the assessment day, so please help me. I'm not good at it.

Reem intervened and lied, not wanting to let Salma help him. Trying to control things, she said,

- Salma isn't good at working on the program. Her relatives helped her learn it.

Saeed rejected Reem's words and objected to her, refusing her interference. He wanted to confront Salma directly, not Reem, as he wasn't convinced by her argument. Saeed tried to exploit Salma, as he had never focused on his studies, preoccupied with his work due to his difficult circumstances.

Salma, who looked agitated, said

- You can help me. I'm not good at using the program.

Salma hesitated and felt remorse for Saeed, whom she couldn't help. She realized that his difficult circumstances had made him lazy about his studies because he couldn't read or write. Salma lied because of her colleagues' betrayal. Muhammad Tariq claimed that he was sick from brain surgery and suffering a nervous breakdown, so he couldn't come to the café to help her.

Saeed procrastinated in working in the group, and Mohammed Hussein couldn't work in the group either. Mohammed Hussein tried to go to the cafe to help her, but everyone, except for Mohammed Hussein, didn't help her, especially Saeed who ignored her help because he was busy with his work. Salma went out of the classroom with Reem, as she couldn't act on her own without Reem, who stood up for her. Reem had been their classmate for four years and knew them well.

- You shouldn't help them

Reem said, looking at Salma, who sighed with relief.

- They'll do it on their own. They didn't help you, so you're not obligated to do it, so ignore them.

The next day, the day of the practical exam, Salma and Reem earned their grades thanks to Salma's efforts. Salma continued to help Reem at the café in front of the college, where they worked on Visual Basic software design and coding. Salma sat next to Reem, who spent a few hours writing code on her laptop. On another day, inside the college auditorium, Rahma Refaat received a “good” grade, unlike Reem, who received an “acceptable” grade. Salma told her young classmates about their grades in front of them, and Reem knew Rahma’s grade.

Reem felt jealous, and her face turned angry. She compared herself to Rahma, and a fight broke out between them in the lecture hall that lasted for hours, over grades. Rahma explained that she hadn't found anyone to help her, and that she couldn't use Visual Basic. She said that a colleague of hers had helped her, and sent her pictures of the codes before they were printed. Rahma continued to visit the professor's office, asking him questions several times, and she got a good grade, unlike her colleagues. In the middle of the fight...

Rahma said to Reem, looking at her:

- You refused to help me because you found Salma there to help you with Visual Basic.

Salma, who seemed surprised, intervened, addressing Rahma, who pointed at her because of her refusal to help her:

- Why are you pointing at me, Rahma?

Rahma, trying to defend herself, replied, looking at Salma:

- Don't interfere between me and Reem. I'm talking to her, not you. You have nothing to do with what's going on between us.

Salma didn't answer, and she felt sad. The argument ended after Reem caused trouble, as usual, by becoming ill-tempered and psychologically unstable.

Reem, looking angry, looked at Salma with a malicious look,

- You saw how Rahma Refaat got high grades, while we got passable grades, Salma!

Salma didn't know how to answer, as she was satisfied with her grades. At the café, Reem was upset. She sat next to Salma and tried to write code in Visual Basic. She failed several times until she gave up.

Salma looked at her curiously, saying,

- You got a good grade, Reem, and I want to know how you did it. I can't see your Visual Basic work

At that moment, Reem took the pictures of the programming design that Salma had prepared for her, and she couldn't believe that Salma had gotten such a good grade that she outperformed her. Feeling jealous in some subjects, she began to pressure Salma over the past months. Salma had been constantly using Reem's laptop, as Reem had made it hers for her schoolwork, wanting Salma to secretly prepare her own assignments without anyone knowing. Reem's work looked beautiful because Salma put her best effort into it, and so Reem wanted to get good grades.

Reem kept the secret of her exploitation of Salma a secret from everyone. Salma sat on a chair in her home, focused on her laptop, working hard, more tired than Reem every night. Her back and arms were aching from working long hours from morning until evening, all to help Reem. Salma couldn't take it anymore, so she told her mother, hurt, that Reem was bossy, and had made her subservient to her for the past days, weeks, and months.

As the first semester progressed, Reem's bullying continued, and she even used emotional blackmail under the pretext of being busy with her young son. Taking advantage of her inability to work, she sent Salma a photo of her son via WhatsApp. When Salma saw the child's photo, she agreed to help her, forced by the emotional blackmail. Reem would go out with her husband on outings, while Salma became a victim of blackmail, deception, lies, exploitation, and fraud, falling into Reem's trap. Salma tried to be honest with her and warned her repeatedly, but Reem ignored her serious words and appeared harsh and angry, knowing that Salma had a weak personality. Reem never considered her a friend and instead exploited her for her own gain.

For four years, Reem wasn't talented or intelligent. Her husband or cousin constantly helped her. Her brother, however, was a loafer, hung out with the wrong friends, and always got into trouble. He was a sophomore in college and passed by cheating due to his ignorance. Meanwhile, during the break, Rahma Refaat married her husband, Islam, who worked as a computer engineer at a company.

As the second semester began, the first-semester results came in. Reem passed all her fourth-year subjects by cheating behind her classmates and with Salma's constant support throughout the year. However, she deceived Salma and claimed that her brother had passed his second-year exam. When Salma asked her, she didn't realize that Rahma had accidentally told her about Reem's deaf brother failing his second-year exam. Salma decided to test Reem twice to confirm her honesty, but Reem denied it and lied to her out of fear of embarrassment, knowing her brother had failed. Salma was surprised that Reem would conceal the subject of her brother, especially since she had told Rahma about it, despite their different personalities and ideas.

Salma suffered from Reem's constant bad behavior, as she pretended to be kind while their relationship was a lie and fraught with problems, including lies, exploitation, blackmail, deception, hypocrisy, and self-interest. Salma became remorseful and paid the price for her cruel mistakes for two years, reaching a dead end due to her naivety, as she allowed Reem to help her for the entire year.

She forced herself to stay with Reem to avoid loneliness during her school days. Salma struggled with an internal conflict, suffering betrayal, treachery, and disappointment in her friendships, finding only imaginary friends throughout her life, from childhood to adulthood. In February, the second semester began. On the first day, Salma arrived late to college and sat in the lecture hall, only to notice that she was in the wrong room—the students weren't from her classmates, but from a different department.

Salma left the hall, entered the nearest lecture hall, and sat next to Reem. After the lecture ended, they left together. Looking at Salma, Reem asked,

- Why aren't you contacting me? You blocked me on WhatsApp, right?

Salma hesitated, not knowing how to reveal the truth. She realized that Reem would deny the facts, as usual, and refuse to confess, pretending to be honest. Reem was avoiding confrontation, hiding her secrets, weak and cowardly, lacking courage in front of others.

Salma, who seemed courageous, said to Reem, who was annoyed:

- Yes, that's right, I blocked you on WhatsApp because I am free in my decision. I don't want to talk to you, and I prefer to be alone, away from you.

Reem refused to give up on Salma, afraid of remaining a failure, and she didn't want Salma to leave her at the beginning of the second semester. She said, looking at her:

- I won't agree! We can communicate; we are friends, and you blocked me without me knowing.

Reem, who seemed curious, said, looking at Salma:

- Yes, go ahead and tell me, Salma.

So Salma said, angry and tense, looking at Reem:

- I don't want you to pressure me into giving you the laptop, just because you want me to finish your own work without anyone knowing. I'm tired, and I can't take the pressure anymore, with the pile of your unfinished work.

Then she continued, after sighing in relief:

- Without finishing my own work, it seems difficult, and the problems have piled up. I apologize, I can't help you with your work, and I certainly won't agree. I didn't like you ordering me around; you flatter and procrastinate, and make excuses under the pretext of being busy.

Reem accepted her words, but she felt resentment, anger, hatred, and spite. They continued to communicate, exchanging messages via WhatsApp, but Reem did not stop the emotional blackmail, wanting Salma to continue helping her outside of college or at the nearby café, indifferent to Salma's suffering. Salma pretended to be kind, but she hated Reem and resented her for being exploited. Salma and Reem sometimes had intense arguments that lasted for weeks and months, all because of college work. Their colleagues noticed that they were inseparable and constantly in contact.

Salma cried after finishing the educational materials. She sat silently outside the mosque in front of the college, as she hadn't finished her work yet and was having difficulty starting over due to the limited time. Rahma decided to help Salma and gave her training boards for the practical training, since Salma had none of her previous work due to her academic problems. Rahma had educational boards from previous students she knew from her old school.

Rahma decided to invite Salma to her home, with her mother's approval and Salma's mother's knowledge, but without Rahma's father's knowledge, and without Reem being present.

Salma left the college accompanied by Rahma via the metro, avoiding being late to the café near the college. Salma arrived at Rahma's house for the first time and seemed shy. She sat on the house sofa, looked at Rahma who sat opposite her, and they began talking.

Rahma said, looking at Salma:

- I'm helping you out of my kindness; I didn't do it so you would help me in return, but to earn divine reward. I helped you because I saw you helpless at school and considered you like my sister, as I worry about you.

Salma, who seemed troubled and had learned the truth due to a slip of the tongue, said:

- No... I can help you too, but Reem forced me not to help you. I designed my 'Cinema 4D' and 'Visual Basic' programs for her; she didn't know how to do it without me, so she kept clinging to me.

She continued, looking at her after sighing in relief:

- I didn't allow myself to talk to her at first; our relationship started in response to Professor Bahaa's request because I was alone. Then Reem forced me all this time; she didn't leave me and followed me wherever I went, inside and outside the college. She gave me her laptop, so I took it to finish her work, but I did everything in her assignments by myself, without her getting tired or making an effort with me for a single moment. She made excuses claiming she was busy, so I became forced to help her after my initial agreement, and I found no one to defend me.

She was stunned by the truth, finally understanding the reasons behind Reem's actions, and why she had been forced to refuse Rahma's help. Salma and Rahma continued talking for hours, causing Salma to return home late. Her mother was worried. Salma took the educational boards from Rahma, got up from the sofa, went downstairs after saying goodbye and thanking her. She finally arrived home after a long time. Her father was angry about his daughter's behavior, as he didn't know the reason for her lateness. They reconciled after she pleaded with him.

Her father said, looking at his daughter:

- Don't go to Rahma's house again, my daughter.

On training day, as usual on a Wednesday, Salma's younger classmates entered the classroom and interacted amongst themselves. Reem was present with them, while Salma stood absentmindedly by the window at school, as was her habit. She left the classroom, then Rahma appeared after being late. Rahma discovered that Reem had never intended to help her, having hidden things and deceived her, which caused misunderstandings between them.

Salma was looking for a group for a difficult subject related to the character design and animation program "Moho". But her classmates showed no interest in her, and she couldn't find another group to join, as the program was difficult and not easy for them. Salma found another group by contacting a student, and they allowed her to join after she kept it a secret from her other classmates, fearing they would accuse her of being selfish or view her with suspicion. By coincidence, Reem joined the very same group that Salma was in, and looked surprised when she saw Salma there.

Salma and Reem argued before the argument could even properly end. Reem called out to Salma after she left the classroom, asking her to come in with them, as their classmates wanted to talk to her. Salma entered the classroom accompanied by Reem, and they questioned her about Reem in front of her. Salma seemed troubled, after Rahma had told them what Salma had said. Reem interrupted in the middle of the conversation, but Salma admitted the truth, seeming hesitant before them.

They looked at her, then the group leader asked:

- Was it Reem who forced you not to help Rahma with her own work, Salma?

Salma answered, after gathering her courage:

- Yes, but Reem was angry and told me, then prevented me from helping Rahma after she had asked me to.

The group leader continued her question, and they all looked surprised:

- I want to know who designed the 3D characters? They aren't easy, and our colleagues weren't proficient in using Cinema 4D.

Salma said, after sighing in relief:

- I designed the models in Cinema 4D for my own work, and I also designed them to help Reem with her work. She couldn't manage the design because the program isn't easy. She gave me her laptop to work on at my house since my computer was broken due to a faulty CD drive. Reem was busy at her house the whole time, unable to design because of her young child. She sent me a picture of her child via my phone and begged me, so I agreed to help her.

Reem, who had decided to get back at her in front of them, said:

- Salma joined my group in the Moho program by coincidence, but she didn't tell me; she kept it hidden from me.

Salma defended herself and said, after admitting the truth:

- Yes, but I joined the group because I wanted to finish the work quickly. Reem and I didn't agree to join together; it happened by coincidence without us knowing. Our colleague Umm Hashim was the one who added us to the group; we ended up in it by chance, and she kept it hidden from us.

Rahma said, looking at the group leader:

- Salma told me that Reem is jealous because I got a good grade in Visual Basic.

Then she asked Salma, looking at her:

- Isn't it true that you told me that, Salma?

Salma answered:

- Yes, but ever since the lecture day, Reem and Rahma argued, and Reem showed her intense anger. She felt jealous of Rahma; she looked at me and her face turned furious.

The group leader asked Reem, after turning to her:

- Is that true, Reem?

Reem said, looking at her as she stood before them:

- Yes, but I felt jealous. Rahma got a good grade, while I tried several times and failed, only getting a 'Pass' grade.

Reem intervened and objected, leading to an argument among them. Salma felt guilty and regretted allowing herself to help Reem all year. She had become a victim of lies, exploitation, and deception because of Reem, who had betrayed her. Salma exposed Reem's true nature, and the argument finally ended after a long time. Salma cried in the bathroom, wiped her face, then went downstairs and walked out to the school hall. Her classmates headed to the college, and Salma arrived there hours later.

Salma left the college hall determined to return home, while Reem tried to chase after her. Reem pleaded with her, but Salma, who appeared furious, refused to listen and yelled at her. When Salma reached home, she told her mother what had happened.

In the following days, Salma resumed speaking with Reem at college due to their study group assignments. Salma asked her about certain matters, though she was compelled to and unwilling, as she hadn't forgiven Reem, but she endured it throughout this recent period.

Meanwhile, Rahma, who had gotten married in February, was pregnant and had recently been going through difficult days due to a heart condition. Rahma had to go to the hospital accompanied by her mother, and Salma had previously arranged with Reem for Rahma to be present at the same time. However, Rahma forgot her laptop at home, forcing Salma to accompany her to her house to help her. Salma initially hesitated, fearing her parents would find out, especially since Rahma hadn't finished her work yet. In the end, Salma went to Rahma's house and agreed to help her because she couldn't refuse, and because Rahma had helped her before.

Upon arriving at Rahma's house, Salma sat beside her, assisting and explaining the details. Many hours passed, and when Salma returned home, she argued with her father, who had learned about the situation with Rahma. Salma tried to persuade him to forgive her, which he finally did after Rahma's mother contacted Salma's mother, asking her to allow Salma to help Rahma at her house. Salma's mother agreed.

After 8:00 PM, Salma's sister sat next to their mother, who was helping her with her ninth-grade lessons. At that moment, Rahma appeared at Salma's doorstep with her sister. Rahma sat next to Salma, who explained and helped her for hours until 11:00 PM. Then Rahma and her sister returned home after those long hours had passed. Later, Reem walked towards the college gate behind Salma and Rahma, who were together.

Rahma looked at Salma and asked her:

- Can I come to your house? I want you to help me with my work. I haven't mastered using the device, and perhaps you could teach me, Salma.

Salma hesitated because she was unwilling to help and could no longer handle the accumulating pressure. But she reluctantly agreed and said to Rahma, who was looking at her:

- Alright, but you can tell Reem that I don't want you two to argue because of me again. I also want you to come to my house early; I don't want to work with you both in the evening, Rahma.

Rahma agreed and informed Reem. At that point, Salma felt annoyed by the presence of both Reem and Rahma, as she didn't want anyone visiting her at home and couldn't stand being forced into it. The next day, Rahma was late as usual and had to go to a shop to repair her laptop due to numerous problems it was having. Reem hurried ahead with quick steps, ignoring Rahma, and then called Salma, asking her to take her to her house. But Salma felt lazy and ignored her, especially since Rahma was stalling. Rahma waited in the metro for a full hour, while Salma gave up on the idea of waiting.

Finally, Rahma hurriedly reached Salma's house by "tuk-tuk" and stood in front of the building. She climbed the stairs and reached Salma's apartment door. She tried calling her several times, as Salma had sent her the home address yesterday, and Rahma informed her via message that she had arrived at her door. However, Salma was busy watching TV and initially ignored the message. Salma was surprised after seeing Rahma's message informing her of her early arrival. Salma opened her door, and there was Reem standing in front of her. Salma welcomed her inside, but she felt uncomfortable with her presence.

Salma helped Reem with her work and explained the details to her. Rahma was delayed, having gotten stuck at the laptop repair shop because fixing her device was taking a long time. Reem finished her work, then left Salma's apartment and went downstairs, accompanied by Salma. At that moment, they encountered Rahma, who entered the building gate to go to Salma's apartment after bidding Reem goodbye. Reem left after communicating with Salma, while Salma went back upstairs accompanied by Rahma. Salma sat with her for hours, helping her until Rahma finished her work. Then Rahma's sister came to pick her up from Salma's house.

And one day, Salma took Reem outside the college to help her complete her work at her home. On their way, they took a different route. Reem, looking at Salma, said:

- I want us to go to a place far from everyone's sight. I don't want anyone to see us as we head towards the Abbasiya road.

Salma refused the suggestion and ignored Reem, but Reem didn't insist after allowing Salma to walk with her towards the main road. They rode the bus together, and from outside the window, their female classmates saw them. Salma tried to hide under the bus seat and sat behind Reem, who appeared cold and pretended to be busy. A misunderstanding occurred, as the classmates suspected something strange was going on between Salma and Reem. Later, Rahma went to Salma's house with her.

Rahma arrived at the apartment door and then discovered, looking surprised, what had happened. Reem and Salma told her about the bus incident. Salma was sure that her classmates disliked her and resented her for hiding her secrets from them, so she stopped showing her kind-heartedness. Rahma, who seemed troubled, found out what had happened through a mutual classmate who informed her after seeing Reem and Salma on the bus.

As the help continued, Reem arrived at Salma's house with her. Salma explained the details of her work and objected to Reem's incorrect approach, but Reem refused to comply and ignored her, continuing her work with Salma's help. Hours passed, and then Rahma sat in Salma's house. Salma suffered from sitting for long hours from noon until evening without being able to complete her personal hygiene or perform her prayers due to her busyness. She didn't rest for a single moment, and her back, spine, and arms ached from being constantly engaged with Rahma's laptop.

When Reem finished her work, Rahma was sitting beside her. They communicated and laughed on the sofa for hours, without paying attention to Salma's suffering. Then Reem got up from the sofa after completing her work and left for her home. At that point, Salma postponed Rahma's work due to her physical exhaustion, as she could no longer bear the pain. Rahma accepted this and understood her situation. Rahma left, looking sullen, with Reem, and then each of them returned to their own home.

The next day, Salma refused to help Rahma because she was suffering from severe exhaustion due to her spine, which felt like it was burning with pain, and she couldn't get any rest.

Salma went to the college, and Rahma begged her for help, but Rahma found herself lost, as she hadn't mastered using the program. Salma swore to Rahma that using the program was easy and not difficult if she tried to learn it after a few attempts, especially since the web design site was considered lightweight. But Salma had become harsh and selfish, leaving Rahma scowling. Rahma carried her laptop and sat in Bahaa's office, as she hadn't finished her work inside the college. Salma didn't help Rahma due to her procrastination, and for the rest of the time, Salma was lying in her bed.

Salma returned home from college, while Rahma tried to learn how to use the website on her own. Meanwhile, Salma was telling her study colleagues the truth. She mustered her courage and tried to explain to them the reason for the misunderstanding, pointing to the pressures resulting from helping them and her accumulated suffering. Salma wanted Rahma and Reem to help each other.

On evaluation day, Rahma finished her work after learning on her own, then went to the hospital with her mother and received a good grade early. As for Reem, she entered the lab hall and presented her work to the professor, who refused to evaluate it without giving her a grade due to her incorrect method. Reem cried, became angry, felt jealous of Salma, and didn't appear normal. She sat on the chair next to Salma, who got up to go to the professor.

When Salma presented her work to the professor, she received a good grade, as she had completed it correctly. Salma returned and sat next to Reem, who seemed distracted due to her anger. Reem walked to a chair in front of the lab hall, while Salma hid the screen of her laptop because she didn't want Reem to see her work, fearing her anger. Salma hadn't wronged Reem, but she didn't like anyone competing with her because of Reem's silly jealousy. Reem became furious, and her features seemed almost burning with fiery jealousy. Salma hid her work, and after the evaluation ended.

Salma said, turning towards Reem who was standing in front of their colleagues:

- I didn't do anything wrong. I told you that your incorrect method was the problem, but you ignored me and stopped listening to me. And I swear I never intended to ruin your work, of course.

Reem said after looking at Salma:

- No, but you should have told me several times so I would notice my mistakes. I didn't realize. And you should have corrected my errors so I could fix my work again, Salma.

Reem and Salma argued in front of their colleagues who were watching them. Then Reem became afraid of confronting her in front of them after noticing their stares, as she didn't want to appear bad in their eyes and constantly tried to seem perfect. She then took Salma to a place far from them to avoid being seen, maintaining her external image under a facade of false perfection.

Salma shouted angrily after looking at Reem, who appeared cold:

- But I helped you all year long, and then you stabbed me in the back the rest of the time, and belittled me because you're jealous of me.

Salma said to Reem, who looked troubled and confused:

- But you mocked me and constantly told me I wasn't good enough in my appearance, and you were always lying to me, never once trying to confront me properly. You deceived me and then exploited me all this time for your own benefit, constantly ignoring me because you see me as less than ordinary.

Salma continued, looking at Reem:

- You never once thought about helping me, and you hid your secrets from me because you were too ashamed to tell me, and you didn't want me to know because you've always hated me. And you pressured me all this time because you're an emotional blackmailer.

Reem fled from the confrontation, afraid of honesty because she didn't want to face it. She denied everything, then left the college hall towards the gate out of cowardice. She stammered and then left Salma alone in front of the college gate. Salma met Rahma, who was standing behind the cafeteria, while Reem went the other way.

Salma was hurt, and nothing could heal her soul anymore. She returned home and couldn't forgive Reem due to regret that came too late for the past. Salma decided to apologize despite not wanting to. On the last lecture day, she asked for permission and wanted to speak in front of Reem, who agreed. Salma apologized and looked at Reem, who accepted her apology.

Inside the office, Salma sat in front of the employee, Bahaa, while Reem was sitting on a chair. Reem called out to her and waved her hand, not actually wanting to communicate with her. Salma ignored her after noticing her hand gesture, then went home after leaving the office, maintaining a great distance from her.

Salma distanced herself from both Rahma and Reem, no longer communicating with them after cutting them off. This was because Reem had become ungrateful, and Rahma seemed perplexed as to why Salma didn't want to get close to her again due to her procrastinating nature. Then Rahma asked Salma why she wasn't responding to her messages.

Salma answered after looking at Rahma:

- I blocked you and Reem on WhatsApp, Rahma.

Rahma asked for the reason after Salma said:

- It was nothing, just according to my mood. I didn't want to tell you. I am free.

Then Rahma accepted the matter in silence. With the end of the second semester, on graduation project day after they graduated in their final year, Salma made plans with Reem because she wanted to go out together, but she was extremely hesitant. In the end, she didn't show up, broke her promise, didn't inform Reem about not going to City Stars Mall, didn't go, and ignored her. Salma tried to contact Reem later, but Reem didn't respond to her messages after seeing them.

After a few months passed, Salma went to the old college to participate in the graduation ceremony with her family. She found Reem standing at the college gate, trying to get a ticket for the ceremony. When Reem looked at Salma, she turned her face away and ignored her. Salma was hurt and felt pain, never imagining that Reem would treat her as less than ordinary.

That evening, Salma sent a video to Rahma explaining about Reem, and she was angry. Rahma, in turn, sent a video about Salma to Reem. Reem then tried to reply to Salma's number and sent a message to Salma's mother's number, wanting to speak to her daughter. But Salma didn't want to communicate with her and ignored her.

Rahma tried to contact Salma's mother after pleading with her, while Salma's father was angry with his daughter for severing her relationships with everyone around her, blocking communication, and refusing to see or interact with them ever again.

The next day, at the graduation ceremony, Salma walked towards the theater hall in the Andalusian Garden and encountered Reem, who was sitting in the reserved seat next to where Salma's name was mentioned. Reem shook her hand with an unnatural smile, so Salma returned the greeting and extended her hand despite her discomfort. Salma was smart; she didn't want to ruin the graduation ceremony, so she conceded for just one night.

Then Reem, who was standing behind the theater hall, asked after looking at Salma:

- Rahma sent a video about you, but I hadn't thought about the City Stars matter. I was busy at home and didn't see you at the college gate. But is something wrong, Salma?

Salma answered Reem, seeming troubled:

- No, it was nothing. Perhaps I misjudged you, Reem, after one day had passed.

Salma sent a video to Reem, who recorded herself speaking in front of the camera, saying:

- Reem ignored me after she saw me at the college gate; she turned and averted her face, then asked me about it at the graduation ceremony. But I deceived her because I lied to her.

Salma continued, after getting angry, remembering the difficult times she went through during her college days because of Rahma and Reem:

- I regretted sending the video. You both pressured me, and I didn't want you contacting my father's number, as he was already angry with me because of my problems. Then you sent messages to my mother's number on WhatsApp. But I sent the video to you because I want to tell you: I want you both to stay away from me. Stop contacting me; you annoy me, and I will cut off my relationship with you forever.

Salma ended up alone after blocking everyone, severing her ties with them, abandoning them, and changing her old number to a new one. She never communicated with them again, forgot them, closed the chapter on their friendship forever, and bid farewell to her painful memories, ultimately ending up with no friends.

## **Cafe Wall**

*You spent your life between these walls.*

*You were born in the corner, and your longest journey was from wall to wall.*

***Wadih Saadeh***

Many years ago, Salma was walking on Khalifa Al-Mamoun Street on her way home from school; she was a sixth-grade primary school student at the time. She stopped next to the mosque in the passage leading to the opposite side of the road, waiting for the cars to pass. Behind the cars, there was a young man riding a motorcycle.

Suddenly, Salma decided to cross the road quickly. She told herself, taking a risk:

- I will win the race to the other side before the young man passes on his motorcycle!

Salma ran to cross the road, but the motorcycle hit her at that reckless moment. Salma lost consciousness and fell to the ground. Passers-by gathered around her, and a sanitation worker appeared after hearing the sound of the collision. They splashed water on Salma's face, and she regained consciousness, sighing in relief after surviving the accident. She got up with the help of those around her, regretting her action that almost cost her her life.

Salma walked slowly towards her home, while the young man on the motorcycle had also fallen, but he miraculously survived. He didn't try to help Salma, as he knew she had caused the accident. The young man got up and fled, disappearing forever.

Whenever Salma passed by that same road, she remembered the old accident, amazed that she was still alive and had escaped death. Hope continued to guide her; she carried many dreams and goals in her heart that she strived to achieve.

But Salma became a prisoner in her own home, not having left it for a long time, living alone. One day, she sat by the table, lost in thought, searching for herself after trying many hobbies without success. Until she discovered online novels on digital book websites, and decided to spend the last few months reading. Her hobby turned into a burning passion for books, and she became obsessed with them. She didn't have a library at home due to the high cost of books, so she bought used or pirated novels from Al-Azbakeya Wall at low prices.

Salma entered the world of literature for the first time thanks to online novels, making use of her free time. She created a private account on Facebook and immersed herself in the literary cultural scene. She became an expert at selecting high-quality books, and her talent and creative thinking grew. She preferred meaningful novels that carried messages for the reader. She met prominent intellectuals through social media and wrote posts on her page, through which she hoped to win a book contest, given her difficult circumstances.

Salma never imagined that she would one day meet a respected writer like Professor Atef Ramez, who loves to do good and authors excellent novels, like the ones she had read. Atef saw what Salma had written and shared it on his personal page before she won the contest. Salma thanked him for his support after he sent her books via his close friend Mostafa, the cultural coordinator. She met Mostafa in Old Cairo and finalized the details with him. But Salma wasn't entirely happy, as she felt guilty for using a pseudonym and hiding her real name for fear of society's judgment.

One day, Salma found a message from Sherihan on her Facebook page, asking for her address and phone number to send books to her home. Salma chose a book from Sherihan's library, which was full of diverse titles, and felt grateful for this support.

Salma thanked Sherihan for her generosity and help. Within a short period, she traveled to a deserted village to spend the summer vacation with her family. There, she finished reading the remaining books, was deeply impressed by them, and grew to love the smell of paper. She couldn't imagine her life without books anymore; they had become an integral part of her existence due to her immense love for them.

Nevertheless, Salma eventually closed her pseudonymous account on social media after a long while. She couldn't continue writing under a false name, fearing society's judgment. She was a simple, lonely girl with her own private world. She yearned for happiness, but people had corrupted her innocent soul, her smile faded, and she lost her desire for life in a dark world devoid of mercy and safety. Having experienced betrayal numerous times, she could no longer bear the thought of mingling with people again. She became introverted and cut off from those around her, seeing in them the specter of wolves: without safety, without honesty, without love.

Salma changed after isolating herself from everyone for good. She grew to love the solitude and quiet of her own world and decided to be happy by herself. She was no longer able to return to her old self; she became self-sufficient, living in her world without needing anyone. She wished for her life to transform from darkness to bright colors, so she ignored everyone, rose up on her own, and persevered with patience and hope, without any desire to communicate with others. She became more focused on herself and learned to love herself, after suffering greatly from a broken spirit. She escaped into isolation, away from a harsh and painful reality, to live in peace within her own private world.

The years passed, and Salma disappeared from the sight of the people around her, remaining in her wretched home, her spirit weighed down by sorrow. She decided to write her memoirs, as she loved writing to express her conflicting thoughts and feelings. She stopped caring about people's opinions from the moment she began penning her own diary. Her confidence in her pen and her writings grew, as she wanted to leave a beautiful mark on the souls of those who had loved her and stood by her. She overcame difficulties, even though she never truly tried to understand her strange feelings and disparate thoughts. At times, she felt she was dying, that her spirit was fading after her energy was depleted, but she forced herself to live and endure. In the end, patience was her only choice.

After seven years, Salma sat in a classic café, having completed the final draft of a short story collection titled "The Café Wall," inspired by the stories of her past life. She took sips from her cup of Nescafé mixed with milk, then rose from her chair, having finished writing the final draft of "The Café Wall" story.

She headed to a nearby library, stood in front of it, and imagined herself as a great and successful writer in her field. She had never found anyone to support or encourage her, and she never truly discovered herself, having lost everything in a single moment. She faced obstacles that prevented her from achieving her dreams, but she refused to give up on them. She wanted to write her story for herself, not for everyone, aspiring to leave a positive mark on the souls of readers.

Salma did not seek fame, nor to live in a world rife with corruption, sadness, and difficulties. She had become aware and mature after overcoming the challenges of reading and writing. She adored the world of books and lived in her own private world. She began writing as soon as she was freed from her conflicting feelings forever, as no one had noticed her loneliness within her family.

Every night, she would stand on the balcony and cry, dreaming of forgetting her old life and starting a new, bright life without fear or doubt in her talent. She sometimes wondered: Is she a gifted author, or just a weak writer due to her incomplete language skills? Salma maintained her calm and focus on writing throughout the night hours and wished to join writing workshops to develop her style. She struggled on her own until she decided to publish her first book.