FLAMUR BUÇPAPAJ

SHADOWS OF THE RED CAPITAL

THE PSYCHOPATH

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Vulnera infantiae diutius quam corpus vivunt.
Amabunt, sed amare nescient;
vivent, sed vitam non intellegent.
In mundo iniusto, amor fit somnium, et spes sola manet.

No human being lives forever, but the wounds of childhood often outlive the body itself.
So think carefully before bringing children into this world: do not abandon them, do not leave them at the mercy of criminals, because what is broken inside a child's soul is rarely healed.

Trauma becomes their lifelong companion, following them until their final breath

They will fall in love, yet they will not know how to love. They will live, yet they will never truly understand what life is.

Nightmares and the past are never forgotten—they simply remain awake inside the human mind.

And often, in an unjust world, people begin to believe that only revenge can heal the open wounds of the soul. Justice either arrives too late or loses its way entirely. When evil remains unpunished and truth has no voice, the heart becomes poisoned by the feeling that suffering demands a counterweight—an act capable of restoring a lost balance, however false or violent it may be.
Thus revenge appears as an illusion of hope, a form of justice taken into human hands. Yet more often than not, it does not heal the wound—it deepens it, turning pain into an endless vicious circle.
Meanwhile, true love remains fragile, almost unreachable,

because no one can guarantee it and no one can promise it as a right. It cannot be imposed, bought, or conquered by force. It exists only as a quiet hope inside weary hearts and as a dream that resists disappointment.
Love lives in the uncertain space between trust and fear, between the desire to surrender and the fear of being hurt once again.
And that is precisely why it is rare—and precious.
Because it requires courage in a world that feeds on cynicism, and faith in a reality that often betrays it.
The First Steps in the Red Capital — The Psychopath
Raised among violence and emotional coldness, he became a psychopath.
And yet he managed to become the finest surgeon in Europe—admired by the world and trusted by science.
But the shadow of his childhood followed him through every corridor of success, invisible to others yet unavoidable for his soul.
Because what shapes us in darkness never truly disappears in the light.
the shadows of the past never vanish.
They simply learn to walk behind us.
We heal not when we forget them, but when we dare to turn our heads and say:
You are no longer the masters of our souls.
Madness does not come suddenly.
It is the long silence of pain that no one ever heard.
When a person loses reality, he no longer sees people—
he sees scenes from within himself.

At Mother Teresa Hospital in Tirana, the winner of the national competition for the position of chief surgeon had just been announced.
His name would echo through the hospital corridors for a long time:
Arben Kodra, a young man from Librazhd.
Tall, light-skinned, with deep green eyes and a face that looked more like that of a fashion model than a doctor who had spent countless sleepless nights buried in books.
On that freezing winter morning of 1996, when Albania trembled under the weight of an approaching political storm, Arben climbed the steps of the hospital's main entrance with slow and confident strides.His gray coat moved lightly over his slender body.
His black trousers were so perfectly pressed they suggested military discipline.
His Italian shoes shone across the marble floor as if announcing the arrival of someone extraordinary.
From a distance he seemed slightly inclined forward, carrying the natural seriousness that never abandoned him.

He had no sculpted muscles, no broad shoulders.
His body was slender—closer to that of a ballet dancer than that of a surgeon with a steady hand.

Yet elegance belonged to him by nature.
Even when he had no money, he knew how to dress with taste.

Now that he had become the hospital's chief surgeon, that sense of style had only grown stronger.
The long corridor leading to the administrative offices echoed softly with the sound of his footsteps.
As he walked, he could feel the eyes watching him.
From side offices, a few curious faces quietly appeared in the doorways—not out of simple curiosity, but out of astonishment.
The women working in administration followed him with softened gazes.
Some smiled faintly.
Others watched with hidden thoughts.

It was the first time they had seen a doctor with such striking looks—and with the reputation that already surrounded him.

The young man who had graduated with perfect scores.
The one who had completed postgraduate studies.
The man who had earned a Doctorate in Surgical Sciences.
"He's not just handsome," two employees whispered.
"He's a genius."Arben accepted the attention calmly.
At the fourth step he paused, slowly removed his hand from the right pocket of his black suit, and glanced at the Seiko watch on his wrist.
The hands pointed exactly to 9:00 a.m.
The General Director, a renowned pediatric professor and one of the country's finest physicians, should already be in his office.

Arben had asked at the reception desk earlier, and they had told him the professor had arrived early—as he did every day.
At the end of the brightly lit corridor stood a door with a golden sign:

GENERAL DIRECTOR

Arben took a deep breath, as if trying to hold within himself a calm that no longer existed.
Outside, the winter frost cut into the skin.
The air was sharp and dry, and the streets looked frozen—not only by snow, but by fear.People's breath turned into white vapor, a small sign of life in a city that seemed paralyzed.
Inside, the atmosphere of 1996 felt even colder.
Rumors of constitutional upheaval spread from offices to corridors, from dark cafés to hospital waiting rooms.

No one spoke openly.

But everyone knew.
Words circulated in low, cautious voices—as if even the walls had ears.
The state seemed to be slipping from its own hands.
Laws were losing their weight.
Institutions trembled.
Trust was beginning to crack like thin ice beneath people's feet.

In hospitals, doctors worked long shifts for salaries that barely preserved their dignity, while hopes for stability faded each day with every new rumor.
The mass departure of doctors to Germany was no longer just news—it was reality.
Empty rooms.
Silent wards.
Colleagues who never returned from their "temporary" vacations.
Each departure was another wound for the system—and another bitter question for those who remained.
Should I leave too? Arben asked himself, tightening his coat around his body.Or should I stay, even if everything is collapsing?
No one gave him an answer.
Not time.
Not the state. That winter, the cold was not only outside. It had seeped deep into people's hearts, freezing their faith, their patience, and their dreams of a safer tomorrow.
Arben himself had been offered the chance to leave.
Twice, in fact.
But he had chosen to stay.
To work there, in the best hospital in the country.
To begin his career right there, in the heart of the Red Capital.
He raised his hand and prepared to knock.
A new chapter of his life was opening—
a chapter that would not be simple.Not innocent.
Not ordinary.And the shadows in the corridor seemed to

know that better than anyone.
He knocked twice.When he paused for a moment, waiting for a voice.
But none came.That winter, the cold was not only outside. It had entered deep into people's souls, freezing faith, patience, and the dream of a safer tomorrow.

Arben himself had been offered opportunities to leave. Twice.
But he had chosen to stay.
To work here, in the best hospital in the country.To begin his career right here—He raised his hand and prepared to knock.
A new chapter of his life was about to begin—a chapter that would not be simple.Not innocent.And not ordinary.
The shadows in the corridor seemed to know that better than anyone.
He knocked twice.Then he paused and waited for a voice.
But none came. He knocked again.
Silence once more.Then he slowly pushed the door open, without waiting for anyone to say "come in."The door opened, and in front of him, behind a clear glass partition, sat the secretary at her desk.
"Good morning," he said quietly.
"How are you?" he asked again, and when she did not answer immediately, he added:

"I'm Arben Kodra… the new surgeon… Doctor of Sciences."
"I know," the secretary interrupted him. "I recognize you

from the file photo. Welcome, Mr. Arben."
She greeted him with a faint smile.
"How are you? Your family… all well?" she asked politely.
Arben lowered his head. For a moment he looked as if he had been caught doing something wrong.
It was never easy for him when someone mentioned his family—or rather the emptiness he called family.
But he said nothing.He did not speak of poverty, nor of the dark history he carried inside him.He chose silence.
With quick, almost instinctive movements, he brushed his gray coat with his hand, as if it were wrinkled, or as if he were removing dust that had never been there. It was a gesture that returned every time someone mentioned family.He had once read that warmth and eternal security come from family."God lives in the family," a sentence written in an old book he had read in childhood.Those words always reminded him of his own emptiness.
"Yes, Mr. Arben," the secretary said after a moment. "What seems to be the problem?
He did not answer immediately. He thought for a moment, then once again adjusted the collar of his coat with the same familiar movements and finally said:"I came because Professor Mentor… the director… called me."
"Ah, very good," the secretary said. "Do you have an appointment with him?""Sir?" she asked again when she noticed he was not answering.
Mira—that was her name—was around forty years old, but she still had an attractive figure. Her green eyes stood out in contrast with her blonde hair and well-shaped bust. Her

body was harmonious, without cellulite, still youthful for her age.
She leaned back slightly when she noticed Arben staring at her directly for a long moment without responding.
Mother Teresa Hospital in Tirana was still noisy that freezing winter morning.
It was the year 1996.
Albania was trembling as if on the edge of a storm—a political lava that many expected would soon erupt into constitutional upheaval.Amid this turbulence, Arben Kodra had just won the national competition for chief surgeon.
He had graduated from medical school with perfect scores, completed a two-year postgraduate specialization in surgery with excellent results, and had even earned the title Doctor of Sciences.

He looked more like a top model than a surgeon: tall, slightly dark-skinned, clear green eyes, a slender body without excessive muscles—like a trained ballet dancer, like someone who did not quite belong to the ordinary ground.He wore an elegant black suit, black Italian shoes, and a straight gray coat.
Arben came from a village, but he had always known how to dress well—even when he had no money.
And now even more so.
Yet he remembered something: things were not as they seemed. The communists would never easily forgive the loss of power.

Inside the country in 1996 there was no warmth left.
Rumors of constitutional overthrow moved from offices to dark cafés, from whispered conversations to hospital corridors.
No one spoke openly.But everyone knew.
Words circulated in low voices, sharp and cautious, as if the walls themselves could hear and report them.
The state seemed to be slipping from its own hands.
Laws were losing their weight, institutions were trembling, and trust was breaking underfoot like thin ice that warns of a fall.
In hospitals, doctors survived through endless shifts and humiliating salaries. Every day brought a new piece of news, and each one cut deeper into the fragile hopes that remained.
The departures to Germany were no longer statistics.They were visible absences.
Empty rooms.Silent wards.Colleagues who left and never returned.
Each departure was another wound in the body of a system that was slowly collapsing—and another bitter question for those who stayed behind.“What about me?” he asked himself, tightening his coat around his body.
“Should I leave? Or should I stay… even while everything around me collapses?”
No one gave him an answer.Not time.Not the state.That winter, the cold was not only outside. It had penetrated deep into people’s souls, freezing their faith, their patience, and even the very idea of tomorrow.Then Mr. Arben turned

toward the secretary. His voice was calm but firm.
"You haven't scheduled an appointment with the chief," she said.
"No," he replied, watching her carefully. "But I don't think that will be a problem. I will wait. The people who are inside now… I believe they will come out, won't they?"
He paused for a moment, making sure she understood the importance of the moment.
"It's alright," he added again. "I'll wait.""When they come out," the secretary said, "I'll inform the chief. That way everything will proceed calmly and without misunderstandings."
The secretary, slightly tense, nodded her head. It was clear that everything in this office happened according to a certain rhythm.
Arben kept his eyes fixed on the door, evaluating every possible movement and feeling the weight of decisions that could take unexpected forms."Alright," he finally said. "Just wait a moment. Don't worry. Everything will go according to plan."
Silence remained for a few moments.
The atmosphere in the office filled with that thin tension that only the anticipation of something important can bring. The weak light of the desk lamp cast long shadows on the wall, giving every object an unusual shape and a strange sense of waiting.
Now he felt the tension in every cell of his body.
The calm he showed was only a mask.Inside, his thoughts flew in every direction, examining possible scenarios,

replaying every spoken word and every silence.
He could hear the beating of his own heart echoing in the small space of the office.Every sudden movement of the secretary, every page of a document being turned, every light sound of the keyboard felt like a warning that something could change everything.
He held his breath for a long moment, trying to calm himself. But the thought that any decision he made might have great consequences did not allow him to relax.It was an inner tension that could not appear on the outside—a waiting that felt like a hidden storm ready to erupt at any moment.
Finally the secretary spoke again, as if to break the silence.
"We have become like robots," she said with a faint smile.
"How is everyone at home?" she asked at last, as if it were something important to sayArben immediately lowered his head.
That gesture—that slight bend of his neck—always came whenever someone mentioned family.He did not say that he had no family.He did not say that he did not even know what "family" meant in his childhood.He remained silent.
Then, instinctively, he began brushing his coat again, as if trying to remove something invisible… An invisible dust—as if he were trying to brush something away. It was a habit he had carried since childhood, whenever someone mentioned family.
"God lives within the family," he had once read in an old book.
And precisely because he had never found that God, he felt

as though something unseen was always following him… everywhere.
"Yes, Mr. Arben," she said. After a moment she added,
"Tell me, what should I say to the director? You told me you didn't make an appointment with him, correct?"
He remained silent for a moment. He took a few steps forward, lowered his eyes, and answered quietly.
"No… I didn't."
"Then we'll have to wait until the people inside come out again so we can approve a chance for you," she added, trying to keep both calmness and authority in her voice.
Arben did not respond immediately. His silence filled the small office as his eyes remained fixed on the floor.

"Well… sir," she finally said,
"All right, I understand… don't I?"
Arben did not speak again. He simply lowered his gaze, as though any unnecessary word might shatter a fragile order. His silence was not empty; it spoke louder than words. Every breath, every small movement of his body revealed doubts, memories, and the heavy responsibility he carried on his shoulders.
The secretary watched him, trying to understand what he was thinking. But every gesture of Arben's seemed like a small wall of silence she could not easily break. Beneath that silence, everything felt important. Time slowed down. The office filled with the invisible tension of waiting—and of an approaching decision.
He kept his eyes lowered, allowing his thoughts to wander

in every direction, while the silent answer moving among them remained unspoken, implied, yet more important than any word.
Then she noticed that Arben was looking directly at her—long, steady, without moving, and without replying. She was surprised. It was not the kind of look she was used to from other men. It was colder… longer… almost clinical. As if he wanted to see beyond her skin and understand how she functioned.

"One minute, doctor," the secretary said, breaking the silence. "I'll step in to see the professor."
She stood up, straightened the buttons of her sweater, and beneath her white blouse adjusted the collar with her hand—as though she were smoothing not only the wrinkles in the fabric, but also those of time itself.She carefully brushed her dress and walked toward the director's door.
The room remained without her.The pinewood chairs, skillfully curved and covered in leather and foam, formed a quiet barrier between the office and the outside world. Beyond them, the noise of the city remained outside. Even though the office was on the first floor, the sounds of vehicles and passing conversations could not penetrate the room. Only a heavy silence remained, filling the air with the thin tension of waiting.
"Don't worry, doctor—just a minute," the secretary said, showing him her thumb as a sign.
He did not speak. He simply nodded. The faint smile on his face seemed to say: Yes, everything is fine.

She turned her back and headed again toward the door that separated her from the director's office.

The secretary's room was small, barely three by two meters, filled with registers, documents, and five Chinese landline telephones. The style was the same throughout the hierarchy of the Red Capital.

After the victory of the Communist Party, the color blue had disappeared. The Reds—who had come from the partisan brigades of the South—had taken over every corner of the city. Those who remained no longer felt at home.

Dirty city, he thought. All these inferior partisan breeds have ruled this place for so long. Their time has passed, but the evil has remained.

He continued thinking. In his mind he formed a quiet thesis: wherever communism exists, poverty remains like a shadow that never leaves. And after its fall, everything that seems to have disappeared continues to live silently beneath the surface.

He spoke quietly to himself, smiling faintly.

"Communists are like hunchbacks. Only death straightens their backs."

He had once laughed at that saying. Now it sounded more like a sad prophecy.He stepped back and looked for a chair to sit in while the secretary took longer than expected. For a moment everything around him—the voices, the wood, the foam—felt like a metaphor for the world: hard and noisy on the outside, isolated and silent within, where every movement matters and every silence becomes philosophy.

The secretary was delayed a little longer. Arben sat down

on an old but beautiful chair. He held his coat for a moment, tightening it around his neck against the cold.
The clock on the wall showed half past nine. The red hands moved slowly, like the Earth turning on its axis, unaware that they were measuring time.
For him, time was an abstract notion. In reality, only space and matter—and antimatter—existed.
He had an unusual mind. He remembered everything: numbers, facts, the mathematics and physics he had studied at the university. He never forgot them. He could multiply and divide without a calculator or writing anything down—only in his head.

He understood that madness and insanity were connected to the way humans perceive time and reality.
His life had been spent in poverty, and the cold did not bother him. Outside it was January, and the room had no heating—only a small stove under the secretary's desk that darkened part of the room with smoke.He wrapped the coat around his neck again and tightened it slightly, preserving the warmth as he drifted into thought.
The director's door opened.The beautiful secretary entered, radiating elegance and brightness.
It seems the director received her well, he thought.
"Doctor," she said, "the director will see you now."
"Yes," he replied. "All right."
He stood up and entered the office.

Arben looked at the professor with a hint of surprise. He

knew him from books and newspaper articles. He looked slightly older than in the published photos, but he seemed warm and wise.

"I feel emotional seeing you, doctor," Arben said. "You are very well known, and I hardly know what to say. I'm happy to meet you—and that you received me."

Doctor Mentor smiled slightly, tilted his head as if glancing toward the window, adjusted the collar of his white shirt, and said:

"Thank you for the kind words. But our time is ending. We wrote and practiced science in our time—that's what we managed to do. Now it is your turn, the young generation, to move forward.

In this hospital we have inherited nothing. The equipment is old, used in hundreds of operations. We have no modern operating rooms, no modern beds, no research laboratories. Everything dates back to the 1970s—Russian and Chinese equipment. Performing surgery today is a great challenge."Arben did not speak. He simply listened.

Mentor looked directly at him.

"The news is, Dr. Arben… to put it simply—""We have chosen you as chief surgeon," Mentor said.Suddenly he stood up and embraced him.

"Congratulations on your new position. Go as far as you can in this beautiful profession. Our mission is to save human lives. For us, life stands above everything that exists on this planet."

"Thank you, sir," Arben said, his voice trembling. "I am an orphan. I grew up in conditions I cannot even describe

to you. I know that poverty…" …is a social illness that has accompanied humanity since the beginning of life. The struggle for existence has always been there. The strongest survives. In this life there is no place for the weak. The weak fall victim to murder, to violence, and become food for the strong. It is the same in the animal world: the strongest wins, the other becomes part of the food chain.""So I will not give way to anyone who refuses to do their duty. Don't worry, Director," he said calmly.
"I know they will attack you and try to provoke you into reacting badly."
"No, no," said Dr. Arben. "I will remain calm. I will follow your orders and act with justice. They will probably make my life difficult here—I know that. But I'm used to it. Everywhere there are people with bad intentions and no morals.""That's true," said Dr. Mentor. "Life is difficult everywhere. But here we suffered greatly under that medieval regime. Everything was a lie—nothing was real. And thank God we were finally freed from that cruel man, from that so-called 'socialist man' who had no human limits."

"But it's not easy," Mentor continued. "Communism doesn't disappear quickly.""It seems not," Arben replied, sitting down again in the chair across from Professor Mentor."Tomorrow I will come to introduce you to the old surgical team. It may be difficult for them to accept that someone so young will become the head of the department. But they will get used to it once they see your skills in the operating room."

Thank you, Doctor," Arben said, lowering his head, almost embarrassed by Mentor's kind words.
"So I wish you success, Dr. Arben," Mentor continued. "For me you are a special case, and I am proud that an Albanian student has become so capable and is already mentioned in international journals. We must rebuild this hospital together—equip it with modern technology, renovate the surgical department and the others that are currently in miserable condition.""Yes, Doctor," Arben replied. "I will carry out all the duties and objectives needed to raise this hospital to the level of European hospitals.""Very good," said Mentor. "I hope the computers we ordered will arrive soon. Digitalization must enter everywhere, not only in your department. I'm very pleased that you are bringing modernization here."
"Oh—I almost forgot," Mentor added. "Shall I order you a coffee or tea?"
"No, no, nothing," Arben replied, shifting slightly in his chair. Until now he had listened without moving, almost stunned by the conversation with Dr. Mentor, paying careful attention to every word of his introduction."Well then," Mentor continued, touching his head slightly in a gesture of approval. "Tomorrow I will gather your department and introduce you to the team. Some of them may even be the professors who once taught you. That should make you proud—it is recognition from society. So work well and raise the department to an international level."
"Yes, of course," Arben interrupted. "I will introduce all the new methods, especially for surgical procedures. I will

do everything possible to replace the outdated surgical instruments and carry out a complete reconstruction of the department.""We will do that together," said Dr. Mentor. "Thank God this day has finally come."

Then he fell silent, drifting into a sea of memories.
Time passed. Nearly an hour had gone by since the meeting began, yet their conversation seemed endless.
"Well, let's conclude our meeting for today," said Dr. Mentor at last. "I wish you success and good fortune."
Both men stood up. They exchanged a respectful handshake and a brief embrace, touching their heads lightly together.
In the room, only the ticking of the red clock on the wall could be heard as it moved quietly, marking every moment for Dr. Arben.
"Then I'll see you tomorrow at eight, at the six-story building," said Dr. Mentor, shaking his hand once more.
Arben opened the door and walked away at a calm but slightly hurried pace.
When he stepped into the outer office, he glanced kindly at the secretary.

She stood up immediately, assuming a formal posture.
"I wish you success, Dr. Arben," she said, her eyes dropping slightly toward the floor. Arben was strikingly handsome, and there was something about his presence that stirred a quiet sensitivity in others.
He opened the main office door and stepped into the corridor, leaving behind the meeting that had filled him

with a sense of beginning—and of trust.
The presentation before the surgical team would be his next step.
The next morning, precisely at eight o'clock, the six-story building of the university hospital was still wrapped in a silence broken only by the hum of monitoring machines and the quick footsteps of the night-shift nurses. A dense fog had settled over the gray facade of the building, as if it had arrived during the night and refused to leave.
In the large meeting hall beneath the surgery pavilion, all the doctors had gathered. The metal chairs made faint scraping sounds as each person took their seat—some still sleepy, others stiff with exhaustion after the night shiftAt the back of the room, near a large window overlooking the courtyard, Dr. Arben sat quietly.

He was not speaking to anyone.He simply remained silent, enclosed within his own world, as if the entire gathering—the people, the hospital, the room itself—had nothing to do with him.He looked out the window.There stood a solitary tree. Beneath the fog it seemed almost carved from stone.
And suddenly Arben found himself lost in a wave of thoughts that arrived like unexpected tides.Silence within chaos.
What is reality? he wondered.
Is it what we see every day?
Are these the hands that cut, that stitch, that save lives—or sometimes close a man's eyes for the last time?
Is it the pain we witness?Or the brief happiness of a patient

when we say: "The surgery was successful"?Or is reality something hidden behind us—behind this curtain of matter we call the human body?
The doctors were talking about cases, reports, statistics.
He did not hear them.
Inside his mind, words drifted like echoes:Nothing belongs to anyone.Not life. Not wealth. Not glory. Not titles. Everything is temporary.
Only fate—blind fate—can raise us high…
or drown us without mercy.
There, in that large hall, Arben suddenly felt like a tiny point in an endless ocean.
He felt how fragile a human being truly is.How insignificant anyone can be before the vastness of existence. Behind her entered the head of the pavilion, Dr. Iliri, walking with short but confident steps. He always arrived first and left last at every meeting. But today was different—even he was five minutes late to the hospital. That alone was a sign of tension.Meanwhile, two young surgeons were whispering to each other.
"Today they're going to talk about yesterday's difficult case."
"Yes… but they say they'll also make a decision about the new team."
"And Arben…""Yes. Arben is on that list."Their words floated in the air, but Arben did not hear them. He was sealed inside a space no one in that room could enter.
His thoughts sank deeper.

What is a human being?
He rested his elbows on the table, stared at his hands, and thought:
These hands… one day they will be dust. Today they cut, stitch, save lives. Tomorrow they will be nothing. Does all this effort really mean anything? Or is everything just part of a vast invisible game, where we are merely pieces moved by a force we cannot seeAnd we fight over a position…
Absurd.No philosopher could answer him.No writer could explain it.No professor could give him a formula.Because no one truly knows.And that is precisely what makes life so mysterious—so heavy, and yet so beautiful.

The worst war, he thought with a faint smile,
is the war within the same species.
The meeting began.Yet he remained outside of time.The director opened the session formally.
"Dear colleagues, today we will discuss three difficult cases. First, changes to the surgical protocols… and the formation of the new advanced surgery team."His voice echoed through the room.
For everyone else, it was real.
For Arben, it sounded like a distant echo from another world.
He studied the faces around him—some calm, some anxious, some exhausted.And he thought:
All these people believe they control their fate. But they don't. No one does. We are all just temporary travelers here.
He took a deep breath.A strange calm settled inside him.

The kind of calm that only people who have suffered much in life—but remained strong in spirit—can possess. Suddenly, the entire room turned toward him.
The director asked:"Dr. Arben, you have the report from yesterday's case. Could you present it to us?"He slowly lifted his head.
It felt as though he were returning from another world into this ordinary one. It took him a few seconds to anchor himself again in reality.

But before speaking, one thought crossed his mind again:
Perhaps this is why I am here—to do something that matters only for a moment, yet can change someone's life forever.Then he stood up calmly, ready to speak.
"Yesterday's case," he began, "was a clear example of the lack of equipment and proper operating rooms. In some places the ceilings even leak when it rains. There are times when the electricity fails during surgery, Director…"Arben raised his head and looked him straight in the eyes.
"That is why we need deep reforms—European-style reforms—and new equipment in every sector of this hospital."
"Agreed," Dr. Mentor interrupted. "That is exactly why I have gathered you today—to bring new blood and a new way of leadership."
Dr. Mentor stood up, straightened his white coat, and spoke in a calm but firm voice."Dear colleagues,
We are gathered here today for an important announcement. I have decided to relieve the previous head of surgery

from his position—not for political reasons, but because our hospital needs people with new ideas. People who master modern technologies: computers, robotics, and contemporary surgical techniques.
We need individuals who produce extraordinary results—patients who once would have died are now alive.
And this is thanks to a young doctor… a man we might even call a UFO—in the best possible sense of the word.

Dr. Arben Kodra.Please, a round of applause for him."
Half the room rose to its feet. The younger doctors applauded enthusiastically, while the older ones remained frozen, exchanging tight-lipped glances.Professor Petriti, seated in the middle row, whispered with disdain:

"He's crazy… I had him as a student. Yes, he got top grades—I can't deny that. But he's not normal. He talks to himself."
Another older doctor shook his head with irony."Well… we've seen many 'geniuses' like that."
At that moment, Dr. Mentor raised his hand.Dr. Arben, please come forward."Arben stood slowly and walked forward with steady steps. The room grew quiet.Before speaking, he embraced Dr. Mentor briefly.
Then he turned toward the hall, tapped twice on the table, and said:
"Dear colleagues… please, a moment of silence."
"Let us now speak about the reason we are gathered here.
God is always just. He helps the poor—and even sinners.

Conscience weighs little before His teachings.
Life, from the first cell to the form we have today, is a formula created by God and placed in our hands.
We are mortal…but we are also His collaborators in saving human lives."
Silence fell across the hall.
Young doctors and old alike listened carefully.
"First, let me thank you for the responsibility you have given me. It is an honor to work with you and with our director, Professor Mentor."
But the room still murmured softly, not entirely taking him seriously.
At that moment, Dr. Mentor rose again from the podium—calm, elegant, yet unmistakably authoritative. He pulled the microphone slightly closer to himself.The noise in the hall slowly faded. Dr. Arben was interrupted to restore calm in the room and to show the director's support.

DR. MENTORI
(firm, clear tone)
Dear colleagues…
This is the reason.
He repeated himself.
I have decided to relieve the previous head of surgery from their position.
Not for political reasons… but because the time demands new ideas, new techniques, robotics, technology, and courage.
We need… young people who know computers, digital

systems, and robotics.
And now… take this seriously.
In the room, the younger doctors raised their eyebrows with curiosity. The older ones shook their heads in disdain.
DR. MENTORI continued:
And these results… we owe to a young doctor.
A man who—yes—we might even call a UFO, in the best possible sense of the word.
Dr. Arben Kodra.
Let's give him a round of applause.
Half the room erupted in clapping. The younger doctors smiled proudly. The older ones remained frozen. Professor Petriti pushed his glasses up his nose with irritation.
PROF. PETRITI
(low voice, to a colleague)
He's insane. I gave him tens as a student… but a normal man? He's not.
He talks to himself at night, in the hallways, in the bathroom, on the street… everywhere.
ANOTHER SENIOR DOCTOR
Well, well… seems insanity is becoming a requirement for the position.
(he chuckles sarcastically)
Dr. Mentori gestured. Arben stood up again to speak. His steps were calm, confident. His white coat caught the light. His eyes—deep, tired, philosophical—moved steadily toward the podium. Every step echoed:

TAK-TAK-TAK.
He reached the stage, embraced Dr. Mentori, and the room fell silent.Arben approached the microphone.
“I am Arben Kodra,” he spoke slowly, in a low voice.
“Dear colleagues… please, listen carefully.”He raised his head and rested his hands on the table.
TAK-TAK. Absolute silence.
“Look, professors and colleagues,” Arben continued, “I know this may come as a surprise. I understand. But the selection of the general director is not in your hands—and you are obliged to approve it. So please, no unnecessary noise.”“Now… let’s go to the reason why we are here. I’ll repeat it—remember: God is always just.
He helps the poor… but also sinners.
Conscience? It is nothing before His laws.
From the very first cell… to the human body we save in the operating room… everything is a scientific formula placed by Him.
Accept that everything is temporary, as you and I will eventually be. Generations change, new ones come. That is why God made change and set the time for every life.
Everything in this life has an end.I am not here to tell you that you have done your work well or badly. I am here to tell you to accept what is new…”
The room listened, stunned. The young doctors breathed slowly. The older ones scribbled notes nervously.“I repeat it because you need to hear it: you have not done your duty properly.
We… are responsible for many deaths. Because we lacked

equipment and prepared medical staff. But we also forgot God, who gives life. You are not prepared anymore. You don't read. You're not subscribed to the latest scientific updates.
You reached these positions and became comfortable."
He lowered his head for a moment, then raised it.
"We are all guilty. And I include myself here, so you feel comfortable… But I have many critiques. Many incompetencies among you have caused loss of life. You are not doing well. Anyone here… you've also forgotten that you are God's assistants in saving lives.
So, in short, we are far behind. In this science, in this hospital, we need reform and collaboration."He spoke with both energy and cynicism. His eyes reflected deep existential fatigue"And for this… it cannot just be science. It must be heart. Fear. Divine responsibility."In the room… no one moved. Even Professor Petriti paused, forgetting to take notes.Look at the faces of the younger doctors—they shone with light.
Look at the faces of the older doctors—their eyes darkened with anger and humiliation.

ARBENI
(raising his head)
And now… let us continue the discussion.

ARBENI
(firm, fearless tone)
Dear doctors… professors… today before you, I am not just

the new head of surgery. Today, I am your former student.
He smiled lightly with irony.
The student you often mocked… underestimated… even ridiculed when I wasn't in class.
You remember, don't you? Friends, gentlemen, until yesterday—and even today—you could speak behind my back. After all, you are also masters of betrayal and backroom maneuvering.
The professors' faces darkened—some blushed, some lowered their gaze.
DR. ARBENI
You said… and I'm sure you've forgotten your sarcasm behind my back, when you laughed and said:
"How can this man be a doctor and, a journalist? He'd be better off writing poetry, reporting… What kind of doctor is this?"
No connection to medicine or exact science.
Pick one profession or the other, you sneered.
I heard it from many of my peers. But I also stood outside the door myself to hear it. How beautifully you cursed and hated me… because I was better than you. And you envied me.
And you could not surpass me. Because I knew all the theses—both in writing and orally.He even extended his speech.
Some of you even told me behind my back… that I am crazy.
Through the hall, a few young doctors smiled, waiting for the eruption.

Arben took a deep breath… I thank you. Truly, I thank you."

He lifted his hand slightly, calling for attention, not noise. Then he continued, with the same calm tone, laced with irony:"Your attacks… your ridicule… that's exactly what made me who I am today.

My research? Among the best in the world, published in top journals.

You made me appear on international covers—as the best young doctor.

I thank you for calling me crazy… but the truly crazy ones aren't the ones pushing science forward—they're the ones sleeping through lectures from 1970."The room held its breath. Some professors clenched their jaws.

"Many of you… esteemed professors…

You're still stuck in the dictatorship-era mindset.

The same lectures. The same words. The same old sketches. You were valued as students… not for knowledge, but for your biographies.And I'm certain of one thing: your lessons bring nothing of modern science.You became professors because of family connections, political ties… your grades already in your pocket. And as professors, you earned your titles the same way: biography, not science.

You've trained doctors who can't tell a diagnosis from a prescription.And today… you poison patients with your incompetence."

Whispers filled the room. Young doctors began clapping. The older ones bristled. Some professors rose from their seats.

PROF. ASTRITI
(indignant)
This is an outrage! You can't talk to a room full of professors—! Who are you? You're nobody! Just Mentori's favorite pet!
DR. MENTORI
(steel-cold, calm)
Sit down, professor.
Or leave.
The words fell, one after another, cold, merciless, like a verdict long prepared. No one dared move. Breaths stopped. Eyes lowered. Chairs froze in place.Absolute silence swallowed the room. Not the usual respectful silence, but a heavy, threatening quiet that crushed thought and opposition alike. In that moment, it was clear: the last word had been spoken. Any further voice would be a futile act of rebellion.
The era of political commissars was over. Today was the era of scientists.
Applause erupted—only from the young. The elders lowered their eyes. Some professors left, embarrassed, heading to the hall to regroup… even to oppose the new reforms. The tension was palpable.
Lights flickered as if the hospital itself remembered this historic moment.Arben stood on the podium, strong, composed, a man who had just spoken the absolute truth. Applause continued. He walked off slowly, steady steps, calm face, but a heart pounding like a drum.

Professor Petriti remained frozen, like an old statue in the corner. His face numb, but his eyes blazing with restrained anger—a cold fire yet to ignite. Silent. Threatening.
Professor Agroni slowly shook his head, weighing every word of Arben's speech—not to understand, but to gauge the threat. Fear of losing power, fatigue of a time waning, written plainly in his eyes.
Professor Alma, the only one who didn't hate Arben, sat thoughtful, arms crossed, gaze shifting between the table and the window. She felt something had changed forever. This wasn't just a meeting—it was a crack in an old wall.At the back, Dr. Mentori met Arben with a slight, almost invisible smile—full of meaning. Not triumph, but approval.

ARBENI (firmly)
I'm not here just to speak. I'm here to tell the truth. I'm here to change this hospital.
Dr. Mentori approached Arben slowly. No words yet. He looked him straight in the eye, measuring the weight of the moment. Then lightly touched his shoulder—a simple, human gesture, filled with trust and support, a silent baton passed from one generation to the next.
DR. MENTORI (quiet, unwavering)
This is how I want you.
Straight. Fearless. Unbreakable. A fighter, if need be.
The door opened with a dry creak. After the meeting, the older professors spilled into the hallway like a scattered flock, without backbone, without guidance. Their dark suits

vanished against the white walls. Fractured voices collided in the corridor—nervous, anxious, resentful—echoes of a reality they refused to accept.
PROF. PETRITI (shouting, enraged)
This isn't over! You'll pay for this!Silence. Their steps faded, but their shadow hung in the air.

Dr. Mentori lingered near Arben, not following the crowd with his eyes—he glanced back just for a moment, at the corridor filled with shadows of the past: old faces, old fears, collapsing powers. Then he turned to Arben.
DR. MENTORI:
The fight begins now, Arben.
(A heavy pause)
Not with weapons—that would be easy.
The real fight starts now.
The fight of words, memory, and fear.
Unknowingly, Arben had just given voice to a new generation. Not a loud, clashing voice, but one born from the refusal to lie to oneself anymore.A voice that needs no permission to exist, because it knows permission is the subtlest form of submission.A voice that bows to no titles, no degrees on the walls, no authority fueled by fear and silence.A voice no longer hiding behind false calm, petty daily compromises, or the familiar phrase: "It's not the right time."
A voice that carries the memory of pain, and the weight of responsibility.To speak is not just courage—it is a burden.
This voice would not be accepted. They would try to break

it with irony, procedures, and soft words masking threats. They would try to smear it, dismiss it as personal ambition or immature rebellion. Professional ErrorAnd when that wasn't enough, they would try to silence him—slowly, quietly, just as the most dangerous things are silenced.

Dr. Mentori knew this. A faint smile appeared on his face, devoid of joy, but carrying the quiet determination that only comes to those who have witnessed too much loss and no longer believe in miracles. He understood that what had begun was not a victory, but a point of no return."But now," he thought, looking Arben square in the eyes, "now you are not alone."And in the end, that was the only protection he could offer.

But the old ones—the ones who live by silence, who survive by forgetting—they never forgive the truth. They wait for it, twist it, call it dangerous, because it shakes their foundations.

Arben listened without interruption. He nodded slightly, not in surrender, but in acceptance of the weight of what lay ahead. His face remained calm, his eyes clear, as though he had long since made peace with the consequences.There was no naivety in that calm—only resolve. He knew words once spoken cannot be taken back, and the path he had chosen had no return. His silence was the strongest answer.

—This kid is dangerous.

The words hung heavy in the air, like an unmarked diagnosis in a chart. Prof. Petriti did not shout; there was no need. His anger was cold, honed by years of power.

—He humiliated us in front of everyone, —he continued—

Not with volume, but with courage. And that's the worst part. We have to take him down immediately. Stop him… before he gains momentum.
Prof. Agroni pressed his lips together. He knew where this conversation was heading. He adjusted his glasses with a nervous gesture.
—Mentori can't remove him, —he finally said. —He personally signed off on it. Full responsibility.
A faint shadow crossed Prof. Petriti's face. He turned slowly, with that calm that always signals something worse than an outburst.
—Then we'll find another way, —he said. —The system has more than one exit.
He paused for a moment, then added in a low voice, almost to himself:
—A man who speaks like that… he can't hold these positions for long. Not here. Not among us.He narrowed his eyes, scanning the room instinctively, like a snake checking its territory before striking. He sought allies, silence, fear— and he found them.

Prof. Alma approached, standing at his side. Her voice was low but trembled with concern.—Petrit… don't do anything foolish, —she said. —The kid is capable. Honest. The hospital needs people like him.For a brief moment, Prof. Petriti paused. Then he smiled faintly, a smile that didn't reach his eyes. He approached as well, lowering his voice as if sharing a secret.—Exactly because he's capable… he's dangerous.

The words came out cold, devoid of emotion. A conclusion. They turned and walked toward the dark corridor. Fluorescent lights flickered above them. Their footsteps echoed, measured, like an unspoken agreement. No shouts. No orders. Only silence organizing itself.

A conspiracy never begins with noise.

It waits. It watches. It strikes when the time is right.

HOSPITAL COURTYARD – MINUTES LATER

The wail of an ambulance siren cut through the night, slicing the quiet streets like a hot knife through ice. Red lights pulsed across the building façades, reflecting off the wet pavement, casting pale, trembling shadows of bystanders who paused, alarmed.

Nurses leapt from the emergency vehicle. The doors slammed behind them, and the siren died suddenly, as if sliced in mid-note. They rushed a stretcher across the asphalt; its wheels squealed over the wet surface.On it lay a young patient, bleeding. His shirt soaked in blood, his pale face twisted in pain. His eyes struggled open, then shut, gasping for air. A deep wound ripped through his abdomen—fresh, still gaping—and every breath seemed a desperate fight for life. Every second came at a high cost. His friend ran after the stretcher, panicked, hands bloodied, eyes wild with fear. He screamed, a raw mix of desperation and pleading:

PATIENT'S FRIEND

Please! He's dying! A shard of glass cut him! He's losing blood!

The nurses scattered with urgency. One checked the pulse,

another stabilized the patient, blood staining skin and uniforms. Prof. Petriti tried to approach, but an invisible tension rose between the staff and the other professors.

NURSE

Where's the chief of surgery?! This is urgent!

We need him in the OR in five minutes!

The older professors hesitated, frozen by the eternal routine of risk and uncertainty. Every second stretched like a lifetime, their silence acting as a barrier to the speed needed to save life. The pulsing siren light made every moment more crucial, every breath heavier, turning the emergency into a tragic theater played between life and death.

Then the door at the end of the corridor opened. Arben appeared, white coat immaculate, clear-eyed, as if born for this moment.

ARBEN (commanding)

OR 3, prep immediately.

Team A—follow me.We're taking him to surgery now!

The nurses exhaled, relief flooding them.

The older professors stared, frozen—the patient, the authority, the hospital itself—Arben was taking it all.

Arben looked Petriti in the eye:

ARBEN (low, determined)

Words are done, professor. Now, action speaks.

He surged toward the operating room.

OPERATING ROOM ENTRANCE

The young staff followed with enthusiasm, eyes bright with curiosity and a mix of fear and respect. The atmosphere was charged—adrenaline and anticipation blended, each

movement feeling capable of altering the course of events. One young doctor, Erisi, approached Arben, still shaken by the force of his words from earlier. ERISI
Doctor Arben… How did you manage to speak to them like that?

Arben looks at him for a moment, unhurried, then slowly pulls on his surgical gloves. A measured ritual, calm enough to make you pause and think. There's something almost terrifying in that calm: a confidence not born of words, but of experience. From sleepless nights, costly mistakes, moments where everything hinged on a single decision. A silent confidence, etched deep, needing no loud announcement. It comes from the determination not to back down—even when fear is present, palpable, but controlled. It's the kind of confidence you sense in the way he moves his hands, focuses his gaze, how time seems to shrink around a single goal. A confidence that promises no miracles—only action.
ARBEN
When a truth is silenced… someone has to speak it out loud.He rises, strides to the operating room door, and with a calm yet decisive motion, opens it. The bright lights explode across the room, casting his figure in sharp, radiant sketches—every detail undeniable.
ARBEN (steady, resolute)
Now, we save a life.The door clicks shut behind him. A brief hush passes through the room; everyone knows the weight of every single moment.

THE FIRST MOMENTS OF SURGERY

Bright lights burn like stars over the operating table, illuminating every wound, every needle, every surgical hand movement. Electronic monitors beep rhythmically; heart rate and blood pressure flash on screens, a symphony of technology and focus.

The young nurses and surgeons are tense, but Arben commands every action with a quiet authority that makes them feel protected, even knowing that a single mistake could cost a life. Every incision, every movement, every decision carries the weight of an entire universe, and in that tense stillness, Arben is the center of it all.The lights pulse across the faces of the young team, making them feel part of something bigger, where life and death are mere centimeters apart.

The patient lies pale, warm blood spreading across blue sheets. The young surgical team around Arben barely breathes. Young, afraid, yet all eyes fixed on him.

ARBEN (calm, confident)

Do we have coagulation ready?

Adrenaline prepped?

Bring the small clamps closer.

The young team moves quickly. No one thinks; everything flows to his rhythm.

The patient twitches; blood spurts slightly from the wound.

NURSE

Doctor… we're losing him…Arben lifts his head. His eyes shine with cold, icy calm.

ARBEN

We're not losing anyone. Stay calm… I'm here. I've seen worse.

His words fall like a promise, full of certainty and resolve. Everyone in the room feels reassured, as if their fear has been overturned by his presence.

ARBEN

Focus. This is the moment medicine allows no fear.

He works methodically within the wound, every movement clear, deliberate, steady. Blood stains his gloves up to the elbows, but Arben doesn't feel it—the focus is total, on every artery, every tissue, every breath of the patient fighting for life.

The young team watches with awe and a hint of fear, but with respect. Each of them senses they are learning not just surgical technique, but the art of resolve, calm under crisis, and the power that comes from total control of a situation.

In that tension-filled silence, every beep of the monitor seems to pulse with the patient's heart. And as Arben works, time itself seems to pause—every second a victory, every movement an act of salvation that keeps the team focused and inspired.

He is not just a surgeon, but a leader, a shield. A point of reference amidst the chaos and the life struggling to continue.

HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE ROOM

The older professors cluster together. Tension. Resentment. Ego.

PROF. PETRITI (low voice)

Look at him… he's putting on a show. Inside the OR.

PROF. AGRONI
But what if he saves him?
PROF. PETRITI (cold smile)
Then we destroy him another way.
THE HYPNOTIC SURGERY
Inside the OR, Arben has found the source of the bleeding: a deep, ruptured artery.
ARBENI
Here it is. If we lose this artery… we're finished.
His fingers move with incredible speed.
A precise motion, more art than medicine.
Monitor:BEEP… BEEP… BEEP… BEEP…
The heart rhythm stabilizes. The team exhales in relief.
ERISI (young doctor)
Doctor… that was… impossible.
ARBENI
Nothing is impossible.
Only moments where someone gives up and loses.
We… we never give up. Not us.He smiles faintly, with a touch of irony, almost to himself. At that moment—the lights in the room began to flicker.

NURSE
What's happening?!
A terrifying silence.
Then—pop!—the lights go out for two seconds. Total darkness.
ERISI (heard in the dark)
The professors… they cut the power!

But the lights come back on, powered by the generator.
Arben lifts his head slowly, a quiet fury simmering beneath his calm.
ARBEN
We move forward. No one can stop us.
CORRIDOR, POST-SURGERY
All the young staff follow him out.

END OF SURGERY
After fifty minutes of relentless work—bleeding controlled, wounds closed, the patient's heart stable—a soft hush fills the operating room. Fatigue and relief hang in the air. Every breath from the staff carries the rhythm of a small but extraordinary victory.

ARBEN
It's done. Team, we saved him.
Some nurses exchange emotional glances; some wipe away tears, others smile, unable to hide it.
A young nurse pauses, still shaken by the experience, and whispers:
YOUNG NURSE
Doctor… I've never seen a surgery like that.
ARBEN (looking at the team with calm, steady eyes)
Remember this night. Not for me… but for yourselves. Because medicine is not just a profession… it's a battle. A battle against time, against fear, against loss. And tonight, we won a fight.

He leaves the room with determined steps, hands still bloodied from the operation, leaving behind a deep silence and immense respect. Every team member feels the weight of the lesson learned—the power of Arben's calm, and the true meaning of the profession: that saving a life is not only technique but courage, determination, and trust in oneself and colleagues.The lights slowly recede over the operating table, the dried blood gleaming in the pulsing light. Not only a patient has been saved, but a team has been transformed by the shared experience. He is no longer just a surgeon; he is a guide and inspiration to everyone who follows.

Some applaud quietly. The older professors remain silent, ashamed.

Dr. Mentor approaches, smiling.

DR. MENTOR

Bravo, Arben…

You didn't just save a patient. Today, you saved the spirit of this hospital.

Doctor Arben stands, hands in his pockets, staring into a distant point—somewhere between the wall and his thoughts. He breathes deeply. Slowly, he opens his mouth, as if holding years of words inside.

ARBEN

My life has been hard… far harder than you can imagine.

They tried to ruin my operation… but they failed.

His voice is low but sharp, coming from deep within his soul and his wounds.

ARBEN
I know what people are. You may see them differently. You may think they're good, that they have hearts, that they care for each other. But that's a lie, a pretty illusion, made so you don't go mad. People aren't kind. They aren't gentle. They aren't honest. They are masks. Wolves who tolerate nothing upon them. Behind them… hell.
He laughs bitterly, a smile without joy.
ARBEN
The strong rule. The weak bend. That's what they've learned.
This is nature. That's it. They don't forgive…
Science? Law? Morality? Same everywhere. Empty words to keep the crowd under control. They've learned that the leader rules the people, and the people… the people are slaves. Modern slaves. Slaves with no chains on their hands, but chains in their minds.

But now… enough. We've won.
He takes two steps forward, as if approaching a bitter truth.
ARBEN
Humans are evil by nature.
Born with malice, envy, greed. Born with a desire to destroy, take, and erase.Behind every human smile… a knife.
Behind every gentle word… a pit waiting to trap you when you turn your back.
And don't make me talk about the morality of doctors…
He lowers his head, then lifts his eyes, fixing them like lasers.

ARBEN You professors… in your white coats. You are black inside.
His voice rises slowly, sharply, like an accusation that demands conscience, not an answer.

ARBEN
Do you think I don't see you? You and the others?

A pause, long enough to let the words sink. White on the outside, black within.

Full of hidden desires behind academic titles and dark corridors. Full of false promises, spoken with the same mouth that preaches ethics and professional oaths. Full of sins you wipe with sterile gloves, thinking the latex cleanses everything.But no.They don't disappear.
Those sins stain your soul more than the blood on the operating table—because blood can be saved, while hypocrisy kills slowly. It kills trust, kills dignity, kills the example you should give to those who see you as authority. Your coats are white, but inside them rot festers, fear of truth, and morality worn and stripped at will. And that—more than any medical mistake—is the disease destroying this system from within. You hide behind ethics, but you killed ethics the first time you sold your conscience for a higher salary, a better position, a younger woman.
His breath deepens, his voice heavier.
ARBEN
You are worse than wild beasts.

At least animals kill to eat, to survive. You kill spiritually—for luxury, power, ego. "You claim to save lives, but how many have you destroyed with a signature, a decision, a rumor?
How many people have you thrown into poverty? How many young lives have you used?
How many women have you touched with hands that may have saved lives but have tarnished dignity?"He raised his hands, looking at them as if to see whether they were his—or someone else's.

"You are cold-blooded killers.
But not with a knife. Not with a gun. Not with poison. You kill with words. With silence. With power. With indifference.
You are dangerous because you pretend to be clean. But the truth is this: Man is the greatest enemy of man. And you, in this white room, are living proof."
A chilling silence fell over the room. Only the hum of the air conditioner could be heard, like a cold breath enveloping everyone.
Arben finally sat down, exhausted, as if a mountain had been lifted from his shoulders. Arben was tired and broken—but at the same time proud of his first operation as Chief Surgeon. He had done what no one else had done before. He had brought back to life a man whose abdomen had been completely torn open, whose vital organs were severed, almost split in two. He had rebuilt the body—and now the patient lived.

Everyone was stunned, silent. Some of the older doctors called it luck. Dr. Mentor, however, was overjoyed and proud of his choice. News spread like wildfire. The whole city learned immediately, because in both dictatorship and post-dictatorship systems, news travels at the speed of light.Arben went to the doctors' room, washed his hands and face, removed his surgical gown, and glanced once more down the corridor of the six-story hospital, which sagged under age, filth, and spring-loaded beds that creaked rhythmically; the sound carried from afar.

"What kind of hospital is this?" he thought. "Not even in Africa is there a hospital like this. This is socialism, my friends…" He smiled bitterly. "But go to Oncology, and it's even worse. You walk in healthy, you come out dead. Miserable conditions. No equipment. Doctors who steal everything. This is our shame as a society," he thought again. "That's why reforms are needed. New facilities, the latest equipment, like everywhere else in Europe."

The central hospital in Albania was like a graveyard parking lot. This was the investment of socialism and the Political Bureau, which has kept—and continues to keep—the country hostage.

He put on his black suit, combed his hair in the mirror, and after a moment added his blue tie. Then he stepped into the courtyard and looked toward the street to catch a taxi. Until that day, he had received a trainee's salary at the hospital, like any other resident. Today was his first day as a full-employed doctor. He had saved ten thousand old lek, which he kept in his wallet.

He lived in a room at Student City, in Building 18, with a young mathematics professor. There was no direct bus; only one to the city center, since the only line ran Kombinat–Kinostudio. At the hospital, dozens of people gathered at the station, and boarding the bus was a major sacrifice. He also had to watch out for the many pickpockets, who stole almost everyone in suits—and worse, the elderly."Albania… growing old," he thought again. "When things are like this in the capital, you have no idea what it's like in my district. I grew up in the dorms of Librazhdi, where poverty has no bounds."

He lifted his head, glancing left to see if a taxi passed by, or if he needed to step into the street to flag one down. He waited a moment in the corner of the courtyard, listening to the distant hum of ambulances and the shouts of doctors running through corridors. He knew well that this hospital, though dilapidated, was the place where he had to fight for the lives of others. But sometimes it seemed he also had to fight the system itself—against the ever-present dust, broken equipment, and the mentality of old doctors who only waited for retirement.At that moment, an old, faded yellow taxi appeared at the edge of the street. The driver, a man in his sixties with a wrinkled face and an unlit cigarette between his fingers, stopped in front of him.

"Where to, doctor?" the man asked, with a crooked smile, as if he had known him for years.Arben opened the door, sat in the back seat, and smelled the thick stench of old tobacco and burnt rubber. The seat creaked under his weight.

"To Student City, Building 18," he said calmly.

The driver started the car, which trembled as if waking from a week-long sleep. The weak evening lights illuminated the cracked sidewalks, the gray communist-era building facades, and the tired faces of people waiting for overcrowded buses.

"I heard about the operation," the driver said, glancing at Arben through the mirror. "They say you performed a miracle today."

Arben didn't speak for a moment, then said:

"It wasn't a miracle. It was a difficult calculation… but done right."

"People are saying they saw God walk into the operating room," the driver laughed, trying to lighten the mood. "Eh, doctor, people here love to talk."

Arben smiled faintly, but his eyes remained somber. His mind returned to the patient he left behind—the torn abdomen, the endless sutures, the moment when the monitor nearly stopped.

"People talk," he whispered. "But hospitals don't. They tell the truth. And the truth is bitter."

The driver remained silent. The quiet road continued between old concrete buildings. The streetlights flickered, as if tired of the life of the capital as well.

When they reached Student City, Arben slowly got out. The evening air touched his face. Before him stretched the long building, with large windows where poor students lived among old books and big hopes.

He paused a few seconds at the entrance, looked up at the

gray sky over Tirana, and thought:
"The first day is over. Tomorrow begins the second battle."
Then he opened the building's door and went inside. He climbed slowly to the second floor, hearing the sound of his shoes on the old concrete stairs, which creaked under the weight of every person. The corridor smelled of dampness, old paint, and the electric stoves the students secretly lit. His room was number 112.
He pushed open the thin wooden door and entered. The scene was the same as every day—and equally sad. A spring bed that squeaked
Wheap proached. The old, thin mattress, worn in the middle, where the body sank like in a soft pit. On top, several military gray wool blankets that smelled faintly of damp storage.
In the corner stood an old heater, which barely warmed the surrounding air and squeaked as if ready to explode. The windows were old, glass cracked; in one corner a piece was missing, covered with cardboard and tape. Bathroom? There wasn't one.
At the end of the hallway, there was a communal one, always carrying the stench of chlorine, mold, and chaos. Water came on a schedule—sometimes. Showers? Almost never worked. Washing yourself was a luxury. Washing yourself properly—science fiction.
He smiled bitterly to himself.
"Filthy dorm… but it's home for now," he thought.
He carefully removed his suit, folded it neatly, and placed it on the single chair. He opened the small wooden wardrobe

at the end of the room—it too scratched and worn like the claws of dark cats—and took out his sports clothes. He put them on slowly, feeling exhaustion press down on every muscle.Then he sat on the spring bed, which let out a long squeak as if protesting.He looked around the small room: the cracked window, the heavy blankets, the tiny table where he kept his university textbooks—and thought:"This is the life of a doctor in Albania. This is my life now."
Arben stretched out a little on the spring bed. He heard a long creeeeak that made his nerves tingle, but he no longer reacted. He was so tired that even the warped metal of the bed sounded like music.
On the ceiling above him was a large damp stain that formed the shape of a map. He had watched it grow over time, little by little, as if the dampness itself was slowly eroding the students' breath.

He inhaled deeply. The smell of the room filled his nose—a mix of dust, sweat, damp clothes, and cold air sneaking in through the broken window. And yet… he felt "at home." Misery, when prolonged, becomes normal.He cast his eyes to the small table. There were old medical books, yellowed and worn by four generations before him. Some were cracked; others missing pages. But most of the knowledge he had didn't come from these books—it came from countless nights in the operating room, and from following professors who rarely spoke.
At that moment, there was a soft knock on the door.
Knock… knock…

Arben lifted his head.
“Come in!” he said, his voice weary.
The door opened slowly, and in walked his roommate, the young math lecturer, a black-haired, tired-eyed young man carrying a few sheets of calculations.“Arben…” he said, looking at him. “I heard on the news today. They made a big story out of your operation.”

Arben rose slightly, leaning his back against the wall.
“Yeah…” he said shortly. “Work, not news.”
The lecturer laughed bitterly.
“Everything here becomes news… for a day. Then it’s forgotten. Only misery remains.”He sat in his chair and began unfolding the papers. The usual dorm silence filled the room. From the hallway, footsteps echoed, electric stoves hissed, and someone grinded something for lunch at a small table.“Arben…” his roommate said, looking up. “You’ll make it. I know it. This room… this poverty… this isn’t the end. This is just the first station.”
Arben lowered his eyes. He felt the words sink in, but he didn’t want to show it.
“I hope so…” he said quietly.
Then, looking at his threadbare clothes, military blankets, old stove, and cracked window, he added in a low voice:
“Just don’t let this place break my spirit…”
His roommate gave him a sincere look—not pity, but respect.
“No place can break your spirit, Arben. You’re strong. You proved it today.”Arben exhaled slowly. His neck ached

from fatigue, his body trembled slightly from the tension of the day. He lay back again, covering his eyes with his forearm, and thought:
"One day this will just be a memory. One day I'll have the chance to change something… in this isolated, cracked, abandoned place."
The bed squeaked again, but this time he laughed softly.
"Well… even the walls are our daily witnesses here."
He closed his eyes for a few seconds. He could feel the call of fatigue, but even more, the responsibilities of tomorrow.
And in the silence of Room 112, among the dorm's dampness and the groaning iron, Arben felt clearly:
His life had just begun. And so had his fight.
The windows were old, the glass cracked, one corner patched with cardboard. The walls were yellowed by time and moisture, and the cold wooden floor groaned under each step.
There was no bathroom. The communal one at the end of the hall—old, always with lines, water coming on schedule or not at all. Showers almost never worked. Washing properly was a luxury. Waiting for water was part of the day. And then there were the other daily processes, like eating or sleeping.
Arben chuckled softly to himself. A bitter smile escaped silently, more instinct than humor.
"Filthy dorm… and here I will live, as a newly employed doctor?" he thought, inhaling the damp, old-paint, years-of-fatigue smell. He had to find a rental eventually. He laughed again at the scene before him.
He looked around. The walls were yellowed, stained in

places no one could clean. The window barely opened, letting in a whispering wind. Everything felt temporary, as if even his life here was just an unwanted stop. But he would leave soon enough—and it would remain only in memory.

Arben's eyes fell again on the table—a piece of old furniture, cracked legs, surface worn by time. He stared at it as if seeing it for the first time. On that table he had eaten, read, rested his head on medical books, written notes and dreams he still didn't dare call plans.

Now the table seemed like a silent mirror: worn, but still standing. Like him. In that moment, he realized that this was not just a place to live, but a test of patience. A harsh beginning that would shape him. And for the first time, amid disgust and fatigue, he felt a flicker of pride—for surviving until now.On the table were a few old textbooks, a notebook, and a tired pen. Nothing more. The room was empty, poor, but quiet. And he needed that quiet. Arben took a deep breath. His body ached, but so did his mind. It had been his first day as head of the surgical theater. He had performed the impossible operation—one that perhaps no one else would have dared. He had saved a man who had been almost split in half.Now he was alone in his small room.

His eyes went to the cracked window. Outside, the afternoon sun pierced the cold floor in a thin line of light.

"This day is done too," he thought.

He flopped onto the bed, covering his face with his forearm. He had seen the ceiling a thousand times—the damp stain

that slowly spread day by day. But today, unlike the others, he didn't think about the moisture. He thought about tomorrow.

The next morning, Arben woke with a strange pressure on his chest. It wasn't fear, nor overt anxiety—it was like an invisible weight pressing on his shoulders. He knew this day wouldn't be ordinary. The previous evening had left his thoughts loose, poorly packed, and now everything demanded order and discipline.He knew he had to work harder than ever. His scientific project was entering its most delicate phase, and the new staff, still largely untested, looked to him for guidance. They were young, ambitious, but unformed. They needed a steady hand, orientation, and clear vision—and Arben knew that only he could set the pace.

As he sipped his first coffee, his mind wandered through questions that had gnawed at him for weeks:What if it's not enough? What if the team doesn't understand my direction? What if the pressure pushes them into mistakes I can't fix later?But he wasn't the type to give up. He knew himself well. When the weight was heaviest, that was when he worked hardest. That was where his real strength began. He decided to build a clear plan.

First—hold a meeting with the new scientific staff. Not just to assign tasks, but to establish standards: disciplined work, deep analysis, precise notes, and above all—responsibility. Everyone needed to understand that this project was not just a job, but an intellectual challenge requiring absolute focus.

Second—he himself would tackle the most complex part of the research. Push himself to places few others could reach. Work twice as hard, lose hours of sleep, spend nights in quiet focus. He was ready.

Third—create a new methodology. An internal system to streamline procedures and give the team the sense that progress was rapid, yet controlled.These heavy thoughts gave him a cold sense of calm. The calm of someone who knows the road is hard, yet walks with his head held high.

Arben stood, put on his usual dark shirt, and for a moment saw himself in the mirror. His eyes were tired, but resolute. He was ready. Today, nothing would distract him.

The door closed slowly behind him, and he stepped out to face his new team—a new day, a new challenge, and only one path forward: work, work, and more work.Time moved fast. He prepared himself, jotting down some fundamental notes, knowing tomorrow would be even tougher.

The next morning, Arben woke to a light ringing in his head. Not pain, just a clear mark of accumulated fatigue. As he drew the curtain, gray morning light spilled into the room. The kind of morning that forces reflection, more than action.

On the table, his coffee steamed, but his mind lingered on the day's challenges: the new staff… the project… expectations… responsibility.

He murmured to himself:

"Today, I have to get them in line. No more half-measures."

Soon he was on his way to the hospital. The cold corridors greeted him with their usual silence. In the meeting room,

the new scientific staff waited. Five people, all young, faces a mix of impatience, ambition, and a little fear.Arben entered quietly, tossed the folders onto the table, and examined them one by one.
"Good morning," he said.
"Good morning, Professor," they responded almost in unison.
He paused, measuring each of them. Then he spoke:
"Listen. Our project is entering a new, more difficult phase. And I want only one thing from each of you: absolute focus. No mistakes will be tolerated. No delays."
One of the women, Nora, raised her hand.
"Professor, can we know exactly what phase we start today? The materials you sent were incomplete…"
Arben cut her off, gentle but firm:
"Yes, that's why we're here. Today we begin analyzing the data we've collected over the last three months. Each of you will work on the segment I've assigned. No improvisation."
On the other side, Arjan, the youngest team member, stood and spoke uncertainly:
"Professor… all the data is scattered. We need a new methodology, or… it will take too long."
Arben placed the folder on the table with a slight push that drew everyone's attention.
"That's exactly why I woke up at five this morning, Arjan," he said. "I've prepared a new working methodology. Follow it step by step. No deviations."He opened the folder and began explaining, his tone low but commanding.
"Nora, you handle the field analysis. I want a full report by

tomorrow morning.""Yes, Professor," she said, scribbling notes quickly.
"Arjan, you handle the experimental segment. I want preliminary results by tonight."
"I'll try…" he said slowly.
Arben raised an eyebrow.
"I don't want 'I'll try.' Finish it."
Arjan looked up at him, and after a short pause said:
"Yes, Professor. I'll finish it. I swear."
Finally, Arben looked over the team with cold calm."I know you're young. I know you're ambitious. But I need serious, precise, unquestionable work. If we work properly, this project will take us far. If not… it's not even worth losing another two hours." Silence fell over the room. Then Arbeni added in a softer tone, emerging from the depths of his exhaustion:
— I'll be here all day. Any question, any uncertainty—bring it to me directly. Don't wait. Don't leave it for later. Today, we work hard. As hard as we can.
Nora— We'll manage, Professor.
He looked at her briefly, without smiling.
— I hope so.
Then he turned to the board and began explaining the new phase of the research. His voice filled the room while the team wrote down every word.
And inside, Arbeni felt—for the first time in many days—that everything was falling into place.
The next morning, Arbeni woke up early. Through the window of his small dorm room, the sky had the dusty hue of morning.

He felt a slight stiffness in his neck—a remnant of the major operation from the previous day. But today was different. Today, his mind worked faster than his body.

"I need to start today," he thought, as he put on his black suit again and grabbed his work bag. "I need to lead this myself."

At QSUT "Mother Teresa," the long corridors greeted him with the smell of disinfectant and the clatter of metal trolleys. Like every morning, there was a quiet chaos that only doctors could read.

"Doctor," said Nora, the young surgeon, "you look worried. You don't seem yourself. Do you know what you're doing today? If you need rest, go. We can manage."

Arbeni rubbed his forehead, then leaned back in his chair.

— What worries me? The fact that the hospital runs on machines from the '80s. That the staff is exhausted. That modern protocols are missing. And that someone almost died yesterday… just because we live in a country where reform never comes.

Nora lowered her head.

— You're right… but we're here. We can start something.

Arbeni looked up at her, this time with slightly more softness.

— Yes. That's why I gathered you. From today, we begin the first phase of a new scientific project. I want results, not words.

He opened the large blue folder on the table.

— Nora, you'll handle the analysis of abdominal trauma cases. I want a detailed report by tomorrow.

— Understood, Doctor, she said.

— Arjan, you'll handle the statistics of interventions at QSUT over the past decade. Find what worked and what didn't.

Arjan stiffened. He didn't speak for a moment, then said:

— That's a huge task… but I'll do it.

— Gjeni, I didn't ask you to be. And I don't want you to be. Arbeni replied with a slight smile. I want you to be precise… that's all.

He stood up and glanced toward the window of the room. Outside, ambulances came and went without pause.

— This is our hospital. Not perfect. Not modern. But ours. And I want to move it forward, with you or without you. If we work hard, we will succeed. If not… this place will consume us alive.

A heavy silence fell. Until Nora found the courage and said:

— We're with you, Dr. Arben.

He turned to them, took a deep breath, and closed the meeting:

— Very well. Let's start today. No wasting a single minute.

As they left the room, Arbeni felt a weight on his chest— not from fear, but from responsibility.

The day had just begun.

Today, he had an extraordinarily difficult heart operation—a patient who could not go abroad due to visa restrictions and lack of funds. Such a surgery abroad would have cost around fifty thousand dollars. That's why the patient chose to undergo the operation at the state hospital.

In all discussions, consultations, and preliminary talks, Dr. Arben Kodra's name had come up repeatedly. He had

become famous as the only surgeon capable of successfully performing such a complex operation. He was the patient's last hope.

The patient, a man in his fifties, had arrived at the hospital a week earlier. He remained silent, worn down by pain and anxiety, but holding onto a single hope: the name Arben Kodra. His family had heard unbelievable stories about him—how he revived hearts that others had given up on, calling them "dead." They spoke of his terrifying precision, his hands working with a strange calm.

Some said he operated like a machine. Others said he was mad. But no one denied one thing: Arbeni was the best.

Early in the morning, the nurse announced:

— Doctor, the patient is ready. Final tests are approved. He's waiting only for you.

Arbeni stood before the mirror in the changing room, studying his reflection: calm eyes, yet burdened with something invisible; the formal face of a perfect surgeon, and somewhere in the background, a shadow that never left.

"This is the case everyone will talk about… or the one that will crush you," whispered his inner voice.

He closed his eyes for a moment, then took a deep breath, donned his surgical gown, and headed toward the operating room, knowing that this time he would not fight only the patient's disease—but also the shadows that increasingly clouded his mind.

When he entered the operating room, the team rose immediately, almost instinctively, as if his presence carried

an invisible, undeniable weight. Movements stopped for a moment, noises faded, and attention focused solely on him. It was not fear that made them rise, but the respect and trust he had built—not through words, but through deeds. Everyone knew today was critical. Not a routine surgery, not a hospital procedure that was forgotten once the file was closed. It was one of those operations that carry the weight of fate, where every decision, every second, every movement of the hand could make history—for better or worse.

Monitors cast their cold lights, surgical instruments gleamed under bright lighting, and the air was charged with pure, professional tension. Each team member felt that this was not just a workday but a test, a boundary between what they knew and what they would be asked to give.

In that room, in front of a body lying still and a life hanging by their hands, it was clear that today there was no room for mistakes, excuses, or fear. Only absolute focus—and courage.

Anesthesiologist Iliri checked the parameters, assistant Dora prepared the instruments, while Dr. Rinjasi read the patient's chart for the last time. But as soon as Arbeni approached, an unusual silence fell over the room. It was as if everyone waited for him to lead—and at the same time feared the way he worked.The patient was brought to the table. His skin was pale, his breathing weak. When Arbeni saw him, he noticed that his eyes were searching for something… perhaps reassurance. "Doctor…" whispered the patient, just before the anesthesia mask was placed over his face.

"You… only you… can save my life…"
Arbeni said nothing. He approached and placed his hand on the patient's shoulder—a gesture no one had ever seen from him before. It was the only trace of humanity he had left amidst all the paranoia.
But immediately after, a dark shadow appeared in the far left corner of the room—tall, silent, as if anxiously watching the operation about to begin. Only Arbeni saw it. No one else noticed.
The inner voice began to speak clearly, like an old friend:
"If you make a mistake, you'll lose everything. They're waiting for you to fail. They want to see you fall."

Arbeni clenched his jaw. He took the scalpel and placed it over the patient's skin.
— Let's begin. Connect the bypass. Prepare the retractors. No one speaks without my order.
Dora shivered. Iliri lowered his head. Rinjasi was left breathless by Arbeni's cold authority.
The harsh white lights illuminated the operating table. The dark shadow, though bodiless, seemed to inch ever closer.
And Arbeni knew that this time… he was not the only one fighting for the patient's life.
He was against the world.
And against the shadows growing inside him.
"If you make a mistake, you'll lose everything. They're waiting. They want to see you fall."
The staff's movements froze for a moment; sounds ceased, and all eyes turned toward him, as if Arbeni's presence

instantly imposed order and clarity over everything.

Everyone felt that this was not an ordinary day. It was a boundary day, one of those operations where fate hangs on the edge of a second. A surgery that could linger in memory—either as a triumph or a burden never forgotten. Monitors pulsed with a cold rhythm, instruments gleamed under the bright lights, and the air was thick with tension, almost tangible. Each team member understood that today knowledge alone would not suffice; absolute focus, discipline, and silent courage were required.

In that room, in front of a life hanging by their hands, it was clear there was no room for hesitation. Only precise decisions—and responsibility.

The white lights beat down sharply on the operating table. The dark shadow, though without form, seemed to approach ever closer. Arbeni knew that a single mistake would be the end.

But I will not fail, he told himself. He would stand strong against everyone.

It was true.

He was against the world.

And against the shadows growing within.Before entering the operating room, Arbeni paused in the sterilization room. Hot water ran over his hands, but he barely felt it. His gaze had fixed on a small spot on the wall—a dark point that moved slightly, as if an eye were watching him.

He blinked repeatedly, hoping the spot would vanish like a trick of fatigue. But it remained, unmoving—a mark

invisible to others but sharp to him, a warning that refused to disappear.
"They're watching you, Arben. Not just your colleagues. Even those unseen."
The voice inside him was no longer a scattered thought. It had form, tone—even the authority of someone who had followed him for years—a silent witness to his doubts, fears, and victories. The voice of painful experience, accumulated pressure, a system that rarely forgave.
— Enough… whispered Arbeni, his voice low, as he wiped his hands with sterile towels, as if trying to clean not just the blood, but the thoughts swirling in his mind.
But the voice did not relent. On the contrary, it grew more insistent, colder:
"The patient is just a test. They set this up. They want to see you slip, to see you falter for a moment, to prove themselves—not to save a life, but to prove their fear."

Arbeni drew a deep breath. For a moment, the room seemed to shrink around him. The lights weighed on his eyes, monitors pulsed harder than usual, and every small sound seemed unbearably heavy. Yet, after that fragile moment, he felt his center again.
His hands stopped trembling. His vision cleared. He knew: in this battle, fear was the only enemy—and it must not win.
He lifted his head with determination and saw himself in the mirror. His eyes looked more tired, deeper. Darker. In the reflection, behind his shoulders, a figure—a shadow—

loomed above him, almost human, moving slowly as if breathing.
Arbeni turned quickly, as if called by name. His heart thumped for a short, sharp moment, scanning the space with contained anxiety.
No one.
Only a metal shelf in the corner, stacked with sterile gloves in precise order, reflecting the dim light—more like silent witnesses than tools. The silence deepened, and Arbeni realized that what had driven him to return was not external, but an inner voice that would not let him rest.

He bent to pick up his surgical cap, his hands trembling slightly, nearly imperceptible to the eye but not to him. Not from fear of the operation—human hearts were familiar territory, maps he had read hundreds of times under bright OR lights.
What scared him was his own heart. Its irregular rhythm, that unreasonable beat that flared whenever shadows seemed to move in the corners, as if the room had invisible eyes. It was not imagination, he told himself. But the body did not heed reason.
He straightened slowly and drew a long, deep breath, as if to convince his lungs and blood to return to discipline. For a moment, everything paused. But he knew: calm was only a brief rest, not salvation.
In the corridor, staff footsteps whispered, trolleys rolled. A whole noisy world outside, while inside reigned a cold silence.

Dr. Arbeni completed the final suture with precise, almost ceremonial motion. The monitors held a steady rhythm, a clear language he understood better than words. Everything was where it should be. The heart before him beat calmly, confidently.

He paused, surveying the surgical field, removing his gloves carefully, as if not to disturb the balance achieved. A clean operation. Successful. No mistakes.
— Close it, he said, low but firm.

As the nurses began the final procedures, Arbeni stepped back. For the first time that night, his own heart responded to the silence with a steady beat—not because fear had vanished, but because… For the first time, he had gained the upper hand. The operation was nearing its end. The heart on the monitor beat steadily—no deviations, no alarms. The green lines continued their orderly march, an indisputable proof that Arbeni's hand had been steadier than the voices.

He completed the final suture and paused for a moment.
— The rhythm is perfect, — said the nurse, glancing at the monitor.
— Yes, — Arbeni replied curtly. — Let's close it.

As the instruments were removed one by one, the shadows lingering in the corners of the OR thickened. They were no longer just darkness—they took on human shapes.

Professors. Senior colleagues. Those who had been waiting for a small mistake, a slip of the hand, a moment of uncertainty.

— He had luck today, — one whispered, barely audible.

— No, — another replied, lips pressed tight. — He prepared. Better than I expected.

Their words floated in the air like tiny needles, but they no longer touched him. Arbeni removed his gloves slowly, with a calm that was not pride, but control. His success required no applause.

— Patient stable. Can be transferred, — he said clearly.

Dr. Arbeni looked once more at the surgical tools. Old, worn, abused by careless hands. They were more than metal; they were evidence of long-standing neglect. Once precise, reliable, now bearing the marks of negligence and a system that had forgotten them.

In his mind, the tools were not to blame. They were simply a consequence—a consequence of people who didn't know where to complain about their oppressors, beaten down, silenced, transformed into the helpless by a hierarchy that used them and discarded them when they were no longer useful.

He sat down and conducted a second inventory, not on paper, but in his mind. Every scalpel, every clamp, every instrument passed through his memory with surgical precision. He decided to repair them all—not only for upcoming surgeries, but as a small act of resistance against chaos and surrender.In the quiet after the operation, amid the antiseptic and cold metal, Arbeni felt that fixing the

tools was a way to fix something inside himself. He could not fix the system. But he could fix the tools. And for him, that was enough—for now.

He called his assistant, the nurse.

— I want a complete lineup of every instrument we use in surgery every day, — he said. She began to sort and count them carefully, one by one, ensuring none were missing.

THE TOOLS

On the instrument table, they stood in formation like soldiers:

Scalpels #10 and #15 for the first incision.

DeBakey vascular clamps.

Finochietto sternal retractors, large, heavy, cold.

Curved Metzenbaum scissors. Kocher and Adson forceps.

Kelly and Halstead hemostats. Yankauer suction tubes.

The cardiopulmonary bypass machine, a towering device with a faint motor hum.

3D surgical navigation monitor, the computer Arbeni obsessively relied on.

His new assistant, Dora, a woman in her early thirties, touched the instruments carefully. She glanced at Arbeni hesitantly: they had warned her he was a genius, but also… unusual.

Arbeni reconstructed the operation in his mind from the very beginning. Every step, every incision, every movement of the scalpel was recreated with extraordinary care. He had to know exactly how to act and where he could improve. Nothing could be left to chance; every detail, every instrument, every motion had to be controlled,

predictable. In his mind, the operation was already done— but still, there was room for refinement.

The beginning of the operation

The anesthesiologist, Dr. Iliri, cast one last glance at the monitor and spoke in a calm, almost mechanical voice:

— Parameters stable. Patient at 1.8 MAC. You may start whenever you wish, Dr. Kodra.

Arbeni stepped forward deliberately. His right hand reached for the scalpel. But before touching the cold metal, a familiar, unseen voice echoed in his mind like an old, persistent reminder:

"Don't trust the anesthesiologist… He altered the dose on purpose… Check it yourself."

He paused. Took a step back. For a moment, his body trembled slightly, as if his nerves had received an opposing command from his will. His hands shook, but not enough to lose control; it was the trembling of a man entering territory where mistakes were unforgivable.

With intense focus, Arbeni returned his gaze to the monitor. Pulse: steady. Saturation: stable. Blood pressure: within limits. Everything was perfect. Too perfect.He drew a deep breath. The cold OR air cleared his mind for a single second.— Let's begin, — he finally said.

His voice cut through the sterile silence of the room, embedding itself like an order that could not be undone.

— And then, — Dora said softly, — scalpel number ten.

The nurse handed him the instrument with ritual care. The cold metal touched his palm, and for a moment, time seemed

to stop. The OR, the harsh lights, the pulsing monitors, the instruments lined up with military precision—all was ready.

No room for doubt, he told himself, opening his eyes from memory. But within him, the real battle had only just begun. Every movement had to be more precise than the inner voice that never ceased accusing him. Every incision, a test of trust—not only in his team, but in himself.

— Yes, Doctor, — Dora said quietly, releasing the scalpel.

Her eyes, however, never left Arbeni's face. She saw something not in the protocol: an invisible shadow that flickered for a moment behind his right shoulder, a premonition passing unspoken.

The operation had begun.

The incision.

A clean, long line down the sternum. Arbeni made it with obsessive, almost mathematical precision. No deviation—like an algorithm guiding his hand.— Retractors, — he ordered.

The heavy metal slid into the opening, the chest expanded with a silent creak. A faint scent of blood spread through the sterile air.

The second assistant, Dr. Rinjasi, looked astonished:

— Doctor… the side sutures are… perfect. I've never seen them this clean.

Arbeni did not respond. His eyes remained fixed on the exposed body. Then he turned to the computer—to review all his data. Computer Navigation

The 3D monitor glowed blue. The heart appeared as a slowly rotating hologram.
— This is the patient's diagnosis: a complicated ventricular septal defect with stenosis of the anterior descending artery, — said Rinjasi.
— I've already seen it, — Arbeni replied coldly. — The computer gives the precise model. We'll use total bypass for 27 minutes. No more. Dora, warn the perfusionist.

Dora hurried, slightly intimidated by his authoritative tone.

THE HEART
The heart appeared in the surgical field as a red object, beating rhythmically. Arbeni watched it as if it were an open book. His inner voice repeated: "Careful… Rinjasi is watching… He's waiting for you to slip…"
He clenched his jaw, took a deep breath, and began.
— Arterial clamp. Bypass. Initiate cardiac arrest.

The bypass machine emitted a low "vroom-vroom-vroom." The heart slowed, then stopped completely. A cold silence filled the room.
Arbeni made a small incision in the septum.
— Metzenbaum scissors.
— Here, Doctor, — Dora handed them over.
He inserted the instrument with a delicacy that made you forget the brutality of the sternum's split.
— Suction, — he said in a tone that tolerated no delay.
The blood was immediately drawn away, and the field

cleared. Dr. Rinjasi shook his head:
— This is incredibly precise… You open the defect area without touching any surrounding structures…
Arbeni didn't hear him. He only heard the voice: "They're spying on you, studying your techniques to take them…"
He inserted a synthetic patch to close the defect, placing stitches so fine, perfect, and symmetrical. As a reminder of the moment, Dora watched his hands and whispered, almost admiringly:
— They're precise.
— Like a machine… So precise and fast.
— No, I'm not a machine, — Arbeni replied without turning his head. — A man just mustn't let anyone disturb his focus. Precision requires control.The words came out tense, like a secret attack, a shield protecting him from doubts and outside pressures. At that moment, his hands were not just tools; they were the voice of discipline and control, keeping every move under command.
Heart Restart — Remove clamps. Resume rhythm.
The anesthesiologist added a bit of adrenaline. The bypass machine slowed. The heart began to tremble… then beat. Everyone exhaled.
— Wonderful operation, Doctor, — said Rinjasi.
Arbeni froze. Inner voice: Don't trust him. He's mocking you. He'll report something.
He approached Rinjasi and said with terrifying calm:
— I don't want commentary. Just work. Just silence.
And so it was. The OR remained in complete silence, only the rhythmic hum of the monitors filling the space.

He sutured the sternum, placed drains, checked everything twice, then three times. His obsession turned closing into a ritual.
When he left the OR, Dora whispered to the anesthesiologist:
— Did you see how he spoke to the shadows? When we couldn't?
— Yes, — Iliri replied, — but no one operates a heart like him. Even walking among shadows… he works his magic.
Arbeni stepped out of the OR with a firm gait. In the long corridor, the hospital's white light felt colder than usual, like an endless tunnel. He stopped, hands in pockets, eyes closed for a second.
Inner voice came immediately: They saw you. They saw how you closed the defect. They'll copy your technique. That must not happen.
He opened his eyes sharply, turned right, and for a moment saw a tall shadow moving past the corner. His heart raced, faster than the one he had just fixed.
— Who? Who's there? — he whispered.
No answer. Only the shine of the hospital floor.

In his mind, Arbeni replayed every moment of the operation. Every incision, every movement of the scalpel, every suture—he found no errors. Everything had gone according to plan, better than he could have imagined.
But the shadows within him didn't cease. For a moment, they seemed like invisible hands trying to make him doubt: "Did you do it right? Did you forget something?"

He cast those thoughts aside, focusing on reality: the patient showed stable signs. The heart beat steadily, parameters stabilized. The operation had succeeded.
— The patient is fine, — Arbeni said, exhaling slowly. His hands, smooth from concentration and fatigue, lifted in a small gesture of gratitude and awareness.
Silence balanced the room, then quiet applause followed. Respect and hidden admiration from those who understood the magnitude of every action. The shadows inside him retreated slightly, not gone, but quieter. Witnesses, not obstacles.
Arbeni smiled faintly. For a moment, calm had won over doubt.

First paranoia: The secret file

Arbeni walked toward the staff room, his slow steps echoing more in his mind than on the floor. Inside, he saw two colleagues focused over a file. He approached slowly. Every move measured, gauging their reactions second by second.
— What are you looking at? — he asked in a cold, slightly threatening tone, feeding his paranoia.
— Uh… nothing, Doctor… just today's protocol… — one said, flustered, trying to hide something they might not even understand themselves.
Arbeni's inner voice whispered coldly and sharply:
— Trust no one… any document could be a trap. Any sign, any silence could tell you more than they want you to see.

He looked at the file, then at his colleagues, feeling a subtle tremor in his hands. Every action seemed suspicious, every silence raised questions. But he knew: he had to stay calm to uncover secrets without losing control.Liars. They're investigating your operation. They're collecting evidence. He stepped close enough that the colleague behind shifted slightly.
— Give me the file. I want to see it. — Yes… yes, of course…
— they handed it to him with trembling hands.

Arbeni snatched it up with a sharp movement. The pages were blank, only standard forms: patient name, date, diagnosis. Nothing secret.

He slammed the pages shut without a sound. They, terrified, backed away without daring to meet his eyes even for a second. They left the room and didn't confront the doctor again.

Second Paranoia: The Moving Camera

When he entered the locker room, a strange chill ran down his neck. He straightened and looked up at the security camera on the ceiling.

It shifted slightly to the left.

As if tracking him precisely.
— No… no, that's not normal. It never moves this slowly…

— he muttered to himself.

Inner voice: They're watching you. They want to know what you're thinking. They're waiting for you to slip.

He approached the camera, almost crazed, and raised a finger.
— Hey! Whoever's watching, I know what you're doing. You won't catch me. You can't copy my hands!

The room was silent. Only a drop of water from the AC hit the white tiles.

Third Paranoia: The Shadow That Speaks

He grabbed his civilian clothes and approached his locker. As he opened it, he felt someone standing behind him. He thought he heard a breath, faint but real.

He turned quickly. Nothing. The hospital room was empty.

But then, in the corner where the light didn't fully reach, a human-shaped shadow appeared, indistinct. It stood frozen, as if awaiting an order.
— Who are you? — Arbeni whispered, voice low, not daring to move.
The shadow did not respond. It swayed slightly, as if breathing.
Inner voice spoke, not as thought, but as someone else:

They want everything from you. Your name. Your hands. The truth.
But I am here. Only I will protect you.
Trust no one else.
The voice was no longer a whisper. It was dense, confident, authoritative—like another doctor inside him, colder, merciless.
Arbeni leaned against the top of the metal locker. His fingers clenched so tightly it felt as if they might snap. His knees weakened, his body wanted to surrender.
The grip continued, sliding slowly up his neck, cold, like a warning snake.
He closed his eyes for a second—not to calm himself, but to survive.

Fourth Paranoia: The Staff Conspiracy

When he left the room, the long hospital corridor felt narrower than usual, as if the walls had closed in to listen. At the end, Dora and Rinjasi stood near a window, speaking in low voices.
Arbeni watched their lips move, the quick glances over shoulders, the small pauses, as if words were being cut with a knife.
Inner voice exploded:
They're talking about you.
They're planning. They want to drive you crazy.
To remove you from surgery.
To make you disappear without a trace.

Arbeni's steps quickened. The sound of his shoes striking the sterile floor was dry, threatening.
— What are you discussing? — he asked, cold, no greeting.
Dora froze. Her face drained of color.
— Nothing, Doctor… we were just talking about the shift schedule… — she said, voice breaking at the end.

— You were talking about me! — Arbeni burst out.
His voice slammed the corridor like an alarm.
Rinjasi's eyes widened, confused.
— Doctor! No! It was just a routine discussion, I swear—
But Arbeni didn't hear another word. Words had become meaningless. He looked beyond them. Behind Dora and Rinjasi stood the shadow. Taller than before, darker, immobile. No face, but weight. A silhouette that didn't need light to be seen—only fear.
No one else noticed. Only him. A presence that didn't need eyes because it hovered over his shoulders, inside his breathing.
The voice returned, calm now:
See? I warned you.
Fifth Paranoia: The Vanishing File
—and here begins the irreversible slide…
He entered his office to retrieve a patient file. He reached for the desk… but the file wasn't there. A sudden emptiness froze him for a moment.
— No… NO…! — he whispered, low voice lost in the tight air of the office.
He checked each drawer. Everything was empty. His heart

raced. Instinct screamed this wasn't mere forgetfulness.
Then the inner voice spoke, sharp and cold, snatching away all doubt:
They took it. They have it now. They know your secret.
A slight tremor ran through his hands. He knew this wasn't just a loss of material—it was a warning. Any place he thought safe could be a trap. The shadows around him were no longer just reflections of fear, but witnesses to actions he couldn't predict.
Arbeni grabbed his head with his hands. He felt the white hospital filled with invisible eyes, watching from every corner.
A white hospital. With black shadows closing in.
Dr. Arbeni finally calmed himself after successfully completing his first operation as chief of cardiology. He walked slowly through the floors of the six-story cardiology center at "Mother Teresa" Hospital.

At the end of the corridor, the former chief's secretary waited and handed him the keys to his new office. Arbeni took them confidently, smiled faintly, and headed toward the office. Memories that had never let him rest burst into his mind:
Early traumas… abandonment by his irresponsible father, who never cared… His mother, a simple village woman with no education, afraid to confront her husband's arbitrary and violent behavior. She did what she could, because his father did nothing… and brought new problems every day.
She has done enough, Dr. Arbeni often thought quietly.

He had been forced to attend elementary school while living in the Librazhdi city dormitory, where he was tortured and abused—not only by bigger, stronger boys but also by some administrators, because Arbeni came from a "bad family background." For this reason, as soon as he finished elementary school, he was expelled from the dorm.

He walked to high school every day from his remote mountain village, Gurakuq, to the city. The trip took around two hours each way. In winter, he walked in rain, mud, and the forest's bitter cold. Every day, he faced his lazy, violent father, who spared nothing… Often, Arbeni would cry alone along the forest trails, carrying his burdens inside, with no one to talk to.Yet he never gave up. Every step toward the city, though his legs ached and his hands were frozen from the cold, a voice inside him whispered: "Don't stop. Don't bend."

Often he would pause by the river and watch the rushing water. It seemed to him that the river was his life: harsh, turbulent, but always moving forward.In high school, even though many classmates mocked him or looked at him with pity, Arbeni never allowed himself to be distracted. He chose the last bench, placed his books in front of him, and lost himself in the lessons. He loved biology and chemistry; he loved the way the heart worked, how it beat, how it trembled in a human chest like a weary blacksmith who could not stop.

He knew his fate was tied to those tiny armies of cells fighting inside the human body.

At home, it was hell. His father came home drunk every

night, violent. Sometimes he spoke to Arbeni with contempt:
— You'll never be a real man!His mother sat in the corner, hands cracked from work, tired eyes filling with tears, but she didn't dare speak. The only thing she did was leave a warm piece of bread for her son when he returned from school.And so, day after day, year after year, Arbeni climbed, with great effort, to the peak he had dreamed of. On graduation, he ranked first in the county—a sharp strike against every prejudice, a silent slap across all the insults, abuses, and injustices that had pursued him.Then came medical school. A new life in the big city, yet still he had no one. He lived in a tiny student room that often felt more like a storage closet than a bedroom. He worked long nights at a bakery, while during the day he followed lectures with blind dedication. He slept little, ate little, but learned immensely.
In his third year, a well-known professor noticed him. He called Arbeni after class:
— You have something others don't. You've fought harder than anyone to get here. These books can't teach it—life teaches it. Keep going, Arben. You will be a great doctor.

Those words, deeply engraved in his heart, gave him wings. Years passed, and through extraordinary effort, he earned a specialization in cardiology. He worked long hours in the operating room, tireless, relentless. Senior doctors began to respect him; patients began to trust him.
And now here he was: in the corridor of "Mother Teresa" Hospital, holding the keys to his new office as chief of cardiology—an achievement that as a child had seemed

impossible.
He entered, surveyed his clean desk, the window where sunlight streamed in, and leaned slightly on the new chair. He drew a deep breath. His eyes welled up—not from pain, but from triumph.

But as he sat, a cold shiver ran down his spine. The sunlight seemed to dim. It was that familiar moment… when memories, like living shadows, rose before his eyes without asking.

The violence. The insults. The screams.
Endless bullying.
His vision blurred, and reality melted. Suddenly he was no longer the chief of cardiology, but a small, terrified boy in the dorm corridor of Librazhdi.
— Hey, come here, you country bumpkin! — he heard a deep voice of one of the bigger boys.
Arbeni, weak and scared, tried to step aside, but he didn't get away. A strong hand grabbed him by the collar and slammed him against the wall.— Who told you to eat before the others? Didn't they teach you the rules of the city—or your miserable village?
He trembled, but said nothing. When he opened his mouth, the others laughed.
— Look at those legs shaking like a rabbit! — shouted another.

Then came the kicks. Harsh blows to his ribs, back, and

legs. In the end, they left him by the wall, laughing. Little Arbeni curled into a ball, hands on his head, trying not to cry. But the tears came anyway, against his will.
— Don't cry, or they'll know you're weak! — his mother whispered once at home, not knowing that he had already lost the ability to hold back his tears.And the memories didn't stop. He saw himself in the forest, with his torn backpack, crying along the long road to school. He heard the night groans as his drunk father slammed the door, and he hid under the bed. He saw his mother's pleading eyes, silent.

VIOLENCE never leaves you alone. It waits. It lingers.
Dr. Arbeni returned to reality, drenched in cold sweat. His nails had dug into his palms, leaving them red. His heart raced, too fast—bitter irony for a cardiologist who didn't know how to calm his own heartbeat.
He knew exactly what it was: trauma. A panic attack. The trace of old violence that never fades.
He rose, placed his hands on the desk, and took a shallow breath.
— You're safe now. You're grown. You're the head of the clinic, — he whispered to himself.
But the voice of the inner child—the boy who once trembled in the dorm—still whispered:
— They're not done with you. They still live in your mind.
This was his hardest battle. Not the operating room. Not the patients. But himself.
That old mental wound that no scalpel could ever close.

And in that moment, he realized:
Despite his achievements, despite his titles, the old violence still lived inside him, like a hidden beast that could awaken at any moment.But this time, he decided not to run. Not to hide. Not anymore. He closed his eyes and swore he would fight this wound—once and for all.
After that heavy moment in his office, Arbeni thought he could move on quickly. He tried to focus on work, to review patient charts, check daily procedure lists. But each file opened, each sheet, each heartbeat he listened to through his stethoscope brought a flicker of anxiety back.

In the operating room, he was known for his calm. Cold, precise, unwavering. But that day, as they prepared for an urgent bypass on an elderly patient, something inside him broke.
— Doctor, we're ready, — said the nurse.
Arbeni donned his sterile apron, put on the mask, and entered the OR. The bright, white surgical lights hit his eyes. One moment, just a flash… and he saw himself again, young, in the dorm corridor, being pushed and beaten by his classmates. An unexpected memory that made his heart race faster.
When he held the scalpel in his hand, his fingers trembled slightly, long shakes he could not hide. "Doctor, everything okay?" asked a young surgeon, glancing at him with concern.

Arbeni didn't answer. He struggled to breathe. Just breathe.

But the room felt too small, unbearably small; the walls seemed to close in, suffocating him in a tight space. The hum of the machines transformed into the echoes of the laughter of the boys who had once mocked him. Darkness crept in… darkness…
"Doctor!" the nurse called again, calm but firm, pulling Arbeni back into realityHe drew a deep breath, set the scalpel down with determination, and focused on the patient. The operating room was his now, and no shadow of the past held power over him.
He stepped back. The mask fogged from his quick breaths. He bent over, resting his hands on the metal table.

It felt like he was drowning.
"Everyone out!" ordered the head of anesthesia, immediately sensing something was wrong. "Bring in another surgeon!"
Arbeni left the room, exhausted, numb. He walked to the break room and sank into a stiff chair, holding his head in his hands. He knew exactly what it was: an acute anxiety attack, triggered by a deep, unresolved trauma he had never sought help for.
For the first time in his life, he realized he could no longer avoid it. He had to face it.
The next day, he knocked on the quiet door of the hospital's psychology office. A woman in her fifties, with gentle eyes and a calm voice, welcomed him.
"Have a seat, Dr. Arben," she said. "I was informed you had a serious episode. How are you feeling?"

He stayed silent for a long time… too long. Then suddenly,

his nails dug into his palms, and tears began to silently stream down his hands."I… I've fought my whole life," he finally whispered. "But I think the past hasn't left me. It's never left me. I'm breaking… and I don't want to break. Not now… Not after coming this far."
The psychologist listened attentively, without interrupting or judging.
"Arben," she said gently, "the violence you experienced didn't end just because you grew up. It lives inside you. And it's time to bring it into the light. Not all at once, but step by step."

He lifted his head slightly. For the first time, he felt a flicker of relief. He had found someone who listened. Someone who didn't humiliate him. Someone who didn't strike him. Someone who could see the invisible wounds.
And so began his second journey: the emancipation of the spirit.
Therapy was not easy. In fact, it was the hardest thing Dr. Arbeni had ever done—harder than medical exams, specialization, or any surgery he had performed.
In the first session, the psychologist calmly explained:
"We'll enter rooms you've kept locked for years. Some are dark, some painful. But unless you open them, they will keep haunting you."
He shivered, but he agreed.
In the second session, she began with a slow breathing exercise.
"Your heart is speaking to you, Arben. Let's listen without

fear," she said, with a calmness that challenged the inner voice of doubt.
He closed his eyes and devoted himself to the inner journey. He returned to the damp forest that separated his village from the city. The fresh morning air, the scent of wet earth, supported him—but the feeling of fear remained untouched.
He saw himself small, with a torn backpack, running terrified from his father's shouts echoing through the trees and paths. Every step of that path was a wound; each step brought back painful memories he could not avoid.
His heart raced, and his breath became a blend of memory and present reality. He felt the fear of a lonely child, but also the strength of someone who had learned to survive. Every bitter memory was a stone upon which he could build awareness and the calm of the present.
The psychologist watched silently, letting him confront the darkness of his past, knowing that only facing it could set him free.

Tears filled his eyes. He could not speak.
"Arben," said the psychologist softly, looking him directly in the eyes, "you are no longer that child. Now you have the right to give voice to the boy who once stayed silent out of fear."
He took a deep breath, feeling a movement inside that filled him with warmth and pain at the same time, and whispered:
"I wanted to scream… but I never dared."

A strange calm filled the room. It was like a door opening from within. This was the first key: recognizing fear and accepting it.

Fifth session
The psychologist handed him a sheet of paper and a pencil, asking him to write to the little boy he once was.
"How would you speak to him today?" she asked, her warm, calm voice guiding him between memory and reality.
Arben let the pen slide across the paper, each word a step toward freeing himself. Every sentence, every line, was like a tether to the fear he had hidden for decades. For the first time, he was no longer a victim of his memories, but a witness—and at the same time, a master of the inner voice he had never dared to express.
His hand trembled, but finally, he wrote:
"I'm sorry no one protected you. I'm sorry you had to struggle alone. It wasn't your fault. You weren't weak. You were a child."
Reading it aloud, his voice broke, and he had to pause several times to catch his breath. His words carried the weight of years of suppressed pain.

The psychologist looked him in the eyes and said with calm authority:
"For the first time, you're giving that child the love he never received."

Arbeni leaned back in the chair and closed his eyes. It felt as if someone was lifting a heavy burden that he had carried on his shoulders his entire life. His breathing eased, but the sense of old wounds still lingered in his body, like invisible shadows unwilling to leave.

Tenth session – Breaking the wall of silence

At a difficult moment, the psychologist asked gently but firmly:

"Why do you think the beatings, insults, and mockery followed you for so long?" Her soft voice challenged the silence.

Arben rose. A heavy silence filled the room, leaving only the sounds of their shared breathing and the soft light falling on the table. Painful childhood memories surfaced, raw and unrelenting, striking him from within. Every blow, every insult, every mockery had cast a shadow over his body and mind—a shield that once protected him but now felt heavy and unnecessary.

He saw himself once more, small, trying to get to school with a torn backpack, feeling alone and powerless. The corridor lights were dim, and his father's shouts echoed in memory, accompanying every step. These were moments he could never forget, because every external blow had left a permanent mark on his soul.

He felt a faint tremor in his hands and a tension spreading along his spine. It was no longer just a memory; it was a real challenge—to accept and release the wounds that had shaped every movement, every breath, every feeling he carried up to this moment. They reminded him of his

dark past.His inner voice appeared like a silent shadow, whispering:
You survived. You survived everything until now.
Arben took a deep breath. A quiet tear slid down his cheek before he even noticed it. It was not only pain—it was relief. A step toward accepting himself and the strength he had gained by confronting his past.

The psychologist watched him, allowing the silence to remain. Her calm, understanding gaze encouraged him to face every memory.
In that long silence, he began to feel an inner transformation. Every wound he had hidden, every fear he had buried inside himself, was beginning to fade—turning into awareness and strength. For the first time, he could see a connection between his past and his present, a possibility for healing and moving forward.
After a long minute of silence, he finally spoke.
"Because I thought I deserved it…
That I was unwanted."
The words fell heavily into the air, like an old truth that had finally found the courage to emerge.
The psychologist did not interrupt. She allowed him to remain there—in that space stripped of defenses.
"And now, what do you think?" she asked softly.

Arben lifted his eyes for the first time without hesitation. His gaze was tired, but clear.
"Now I think they were wrong.

Not me."
This sentence was more than an answer. It was a quiet victory. A wall collapsing after decades of misplaced guilt. For the first time, he removed the weight of shame from his own shoulders and returned it to those who had placed it there.

Session Fifteen – Catharsis
The psychologist decided to take him even deeper."I want you to close your eyes and tell those who hurt you what you couldn't say back then. No fear. No restraints."
Arben closed his eyes. His body tensed for a moment, as if facing an old storm. When he spoke, his voice trembled, almost broken."Why did you do this to me?"

A heavy breath escaped his chest. The silence filled with memories. Then his voice grew stronger, as if something inside him were awakening"I wasn't to blame!"
Tears began to flow freely, without shame, without restraint. His final words came out strong, clear, liberating. "I have value! You couldn't destroy that!"
In that moment he was no longer the frightened child. He was the man who had survived violence. And he was reclaiming his dignity.
The room felt calmer. The air lighter.
Catharsis did not come as an explosion, but as a deep release—delayed,yet irreversible.When he opened his eyes, his breathing had calmed. His hands felt warm. His forehead was dry.

For the first time, he felt no shame—only liberation.
After every session, he left the office exhausted but lighter. He began tosleep better. To breathe more deeply. To walk more upright.
The operating rooms no longer felt so suffocating.
The trauma had not disappeared—but he was learning to soften it, to put it in its place, not to let it control his life.
And so, little by little, Dr. Arben was being reborn—not only as a physician, but as a human being.The Incident at the Hospital – The BreakdownThe surgical room held the usual calm of a morning shift—the cold silence that exists just before a scalpel touches living flesh.
Arben was focused on the patient. It was a delicate procedure requiring steady hands and a clear mind. Assistants prepared the instruments while he reviewed the test results and scans once more.
But behind the scenes, two colleagues—the same ones who had always envied him—were adding tension to the day.

One had deliberately rearranged the surgical instruments. The other had removed a small part of the lab report, making it appear as though Arben had overlooked it during a routine check.
Their goal was simple: a small mistake would be enough to make him look incompetent.
When Arben noticed that a piece of material was missing, his face paled. An inner shock struck him like lightning.
For a second, the room filled with a distant noise, as if an invisible door had opened inside his memory.

"Where is the gauze? Who removed it?"
His voice began to tremble.
No answer.
Then… it happened.
Something inside him snapped.
His breathing quickened, the edges of his vision darkened, and suddenly he was no longer in the operating room.

He was a child again.
He was in the school hallway where three boys had shoved him behind a door and kicked him.
He was in the dark room where they had taken his food and left him hungry just to mock him.
He was in the narrow alley behind the school where he begged for mercy while a hard fist struck his stomach.
The operating room disappeared.
The lights, the monitors, the perfect surgical order dissolved into a white haze.
The shadows returned.
They were no longer distant memories—they stood before him, alive and threatening, following every step and every breath.
His voice became hoarse and broken as he stared at the floor, as if seeing another reality.

"Please… don't beat me… don't take my food…
Please… not again… don't lock me in there…"
The words came from somewhere deep inside him that he could not stop.

His hand shook so violently that the instruments fell to the floor with a sharp metallic crash.
The assistants stood up in alarm, their faces tense.
One of the surgeons stepped away hurriedly, muttering something under his breath.
Arben stood frozen for a moment, watching the shadows moving around him, repeating the terrible words of the past.
His heart raced.
He knew that to survive this vision, he had to return to himself.
His hands clenched around an imaginary scalpel, as if it were the only link to reality.
"You won't hurt me…" he said more quietly, fighting the shadows trying to take control.
A heavy silence filled the room.
As his breathing slowly stabilized, Arben began to feel his inner strength—the strength to remain in reality, not to allow the fear of the past to conquer everything.
"We told you… he's unstable… he shouldn't be here…"
The other watched with hidden satisfaction. The destruction of another man was his triumph.
Arben began to shake again, his arms flailing as if pushing away someone threatening him.
"Don't lock me in! Don't lock me in! Not again! No!"
Someone urgently called the hospital psychiatristShe entered quickly and ordered:"Turn on the lights. Remove the instruments. Give him space." She approached Arben slowly, with a calm that almost seemed

supernatural.“Arben…” she said softly. “You’re in the hospital. No one is touching you. No one is chasing you. You’re safe.”

But he kept staring at the shadows.

“No… they’re here… they’re beating me… don’t let them take my food…”She knelt in front of him, placed a hand gently on his shoulder, and spoke while guiding his breathing“Listen to my voice. Only my voice. Breathe. I’m here. Nothing is happening to you. Those are memories—not now. None of them can hurt you anymore.Slowly, his breathing began to stabilize. His eyes regained focus. It was as if a thick curtain had lifted from his mind and reality returned.He trembled, then lowered his head and began to cry silently.“I’m sorry…” he murmured. “I didn’t mean to…”

The psychologist rested a reassuring hand on his shoulder. “You don’t need to apologize. Trauma doesn’t choose its moment. You fought alone for many years. Now you’re not alone anymore.”

Outside the operating room, the two doctors who had hoped to sabotage him exchanged worried glances.

This wasn’t just a breakdown.It was something that could turn against them.

Because no one had expected that Arben—the man who had always remained silent and endured everything—would finally begin… to rememberConfronting Childhood – The Return of the Memories

In the quiet recovery room, after the breakdown in the operating theater, Arben sat on the white hospital bed, his

hands still trembling slightly.

The psychologist sat beside him without making any unnecessary movements.A faint light filtered through the window, casting a shadow across the floor—a shadow that terrified him.Because he knew what was coming.
"Arben… breathe with me," she said calmly. "You're safe. You're here."
But it wasn't enough.
Something inside him was opening—a heavy door he had kept shut for years with silence and shame.
Now the door burst open on its own.
Without his permission.Suddenly his vision blurred and the room disappearedHe was no longer a man.
He was no longer a doctor.
He was no longer an adult.
He was eight years old again.
The School Corridor – The Beginning of Hell
He was running through the dark corridor of the old school building.
Behind him he heard their voices—their cruel laughter.
"Hey! Come back here, little dog!"
His small feet slipped on the wet tiles. One of them grabbed his shirt and dragged him behind the door of an empty classroom.
They locked him inside.Darkness.
His small chest struggled for air.
He sat on the floor, clutching his knees."Why are you doing this to me?" he asked in a child's voice.

They laughed.
The small glass window in the door opened and one of the boys said:
“Because you’re weak. Because you don’t talk. Because you never fight back. That’s why.”
They left him there for an entire hour.
The teachers never even noticed.
The Walk Home – The Theft of His Food
Then the memory shifted.
It was winter. A cold day.
Inside his small schoolbag he carried a sandwich his mother had made for him—the only meal he often had during the day.
Three boys followed him into the narrow street behind the cultural center.“What do you have there?” one of them asked.
“Just bread…” he replied, holding the bag tightly.
“Give it here!” another shouted.
They ripped it from his hands, pushed him to the ground, and began eating the sandwich in front of him while he cried silently.
“Please… leave some… it’s mine… please…”
They laughed, throwing pieces of it into the mud.
He picked up what remained and wiped it with his sleeveHe ate it while cryingBecause he was hungry.
And no one—no one at all—heard him.The Dark Room – The Worst Torture
But the memories did not stop there.They shoved him into an abandoned storage room behind the school.

They locked the door and turned off the light.
"Stay there until you learn your lesson!" one of them shouted.He screamed."I'm scared! Don't leave me here! Please! Please!"
He pounded on the door.
Laughter.Then silence.
He held his stomach, because earlier they had punched him hard. The pain stabbed slowly through him.
The air felt heavy.
He began speaking quietly to himself."I'll get out… I'll get out… if I stay calm… I don't want to make them angry… I'll stay quiet…"
But no one came.Only night came.And there, in that darkness, the trauma was born.
The trauma that followed him his entire life.
The trauma that exploded today in the operating room.
Returning to the Hospital

At last the psychologist's voice penetrated the darkness of his memories."Arben… you're here. It's over. It's over. No one can touch you."
He opened his eyes.
Tears covered his face.
"I remember…" he whispered.
"Everything… every scream… every blow…"
The psychologist gently wiped his tears with a tissue.
"They are not your enemies anymore. They are memories asking to be healed. And you are not a child anymore. You are not alone."

For the first time, he believed her.
And he understood that confronting the past had only just begun.

To heal, he would have to recover the memories he had buried for years.
The Confrontation with Colleagues – The Hospital Faces Its Shadows
After the incident in the operating room, the news spread quickly through the hospital wards.
Some doctors reacted with concern.
Some with suspicion.
But others—especially those who had always resented his rapid rise as chief of cardiac surgery—saw an opportunity to bring him down.
One of them, Dr. L.K., known for his arrogance and envy, entered the staff room where Arben was drinking a glass of water.
Arben still looked exhausted. His hands trembled slightly.
"You embarrassed us today, chief," L.K. said with a cold smile. "You lost your mind in the operating room. You almost killed a patient in our hands."Arben lifted his head but said nothing.
"You don't look so stable," another surgeon added mockingly. "A chief surgeon should be strong… or maybe the position is just too big for you."The others began murmuring.There were three of them.
The atmosphere grew heavy
"You proved today that you're not capable," one of them

added, staring at him.
Something cold crept up Arben's spine.
The voices. The words. The attitudes.
They were no longer the voices of colleagues.They were the voices of the boys from the dormitory.
"You're weak."
"You're worthless.""You don't belong here."
His mind began to mix the past and the present.
The room started to shrink—just like the storage room where they had once locked himThe voices of the doctors began to sound like the children who used to laugh at him."Leave the little bread… don't throw it in the mud…" he heard an old voice from childhood.
Arben struggled to stand, seized by panic. His vision darkened. His breath shortened.
He looked at the colleague staring at him with irony.
But he no longer saw a colleague.
He saw one of the tormentors of his youth. "Please… don't beat me today…"He muttered without realizing it, his voice trembling.His colleague raised an eyebrow.
"What are you talking about, Arben?"
"Don't… don't take my bread… please… not today…" Arben whispered, pushing his chair back, retreating as if he were expecting a blow.
Voices rose around the room.
"He's completely lost it!"
"Who the hell appointed this guy as chief?!"
At that moment, the door burst open.The psychologist walked in.

She approached Arben carefully.
"Arben… is what you're seeing real to you? Do you see them right now?"He was shaking. His eyes were filled with tears."Yes… they're here… there are three of them… they've surrounded me… they're going to beat me…" His voice broke.
The psychologist turned to the others with a cold stare.
"Do you see what's happening? He's experiencing a dissociative episode. This is severe trauma, not weakness. None of you has the right to attack him for it."
They fell silent, confused. They hadn't expected that.
She turned back to Arben.
"Arben, stay with me. They're not here. We're in the hospital. You're safe here. No one is going to touch you."
He was breathing heavily, but little by little he began to focus on her face instead of the shadows.
"Did they leave?" he asked like a frightened child.
"Yes," she said gently. "They're gone. And they won't come back today."

He lowered his head and cried silently, just like he once had in the warehouse.
The Consequences – The Hospital Faces the Truth
The head of the department was called immediately.
The psychologist reported:
"This episode is not a random disorder. It's the result of severe childhood trauma. He needs support, not attacks."
The colleagues, embarrassed and caught off guard, stood speechless, realizing they had pushed Arben toward a

dangerous breakdown.
he director said:
“From today on, no one has the right to provoke him, humiliate him, or challenge him. Disciplinary measures will begin immediately.”
The psychologist gently took Arben by the arm.
“Arben, we will continue the therapy. This was a difficult step, but an important one. Because now the trauma is no longer hidden. Now it can heal.”He followed her silently, tears still wet on his face.But for the first time…
he did not feel alone.
Sabotage – The Shadow of the Man Who Wants to Destroy Him
After the incident, the hospital appeared calm on the surface.
But inside its walls there was tension, irritation, and whispers that refused to stop.
Some doctors began to distance themselves from Arben. Others looked at him with suspicion.But one of them…
had already decided to turn Arben’s weakness into a weapon.
His name was Dr. L.K.
A talented surgeon—but known for ruthless ambition.
The man who believed the chief’s position should belong to him,
not to “a boy who came from the streets.”
After the episode, he approached several colleagues and said coldly:
“A man who sees ghosts can’t run a department.”
Then he laughed.But words were not enough for him.

He had a plan.The Night of the Sabotage
It was 10:30 PM.Arben was on duty that night.
The psychologist had recommended rest, but due to staff shortages he had to stay.
On his desk sat his herbal tea—the one that calmed him—along with a notebook and several patient files.

Dr. L.K. knew that.He had been hiding in the supply room minutes earlier, waiting for the right moment.
Suddenly an emergency alert appeared on the surgery monitor:
Cardiac arrest patient in ER.Arben jumped up immediately and rushed toward the emergency room.Meanwhile, L.K. entered his office.
He turned on the computer and created a false report.
"Dr. Arben, during a dissociative episode, incorrectly applied the protocol for Patient X, putting the patient's life at risk…"
L.K. placed the draft in the hospital's internal system with a backdated entry.Then he took two additional sheets of paper and forged Arben's signature with frightening precision.After that, he walked out calmly,
as if nothing had happened.In the Emergency Room
Arben entered with full professional focus.
The patient was a young man—twenty-seven years old—with an extremely weak pulse.
Arben immediately began the procedures.
Defibrillator.
Adrenaline.

Heart rhythm monitoring.
Everything was going perfectly.
But suddenly—
while giving instructions—
he heard an imaginary voice.
A scream from his childhood.
"Look! The crazy one is here!"
Arben lifted his head for a second, confused.
His heart pounded.

The nurse noticed.
"Doctor? Are you okay?"He took a deep breath, pushed away the shadow of the past, and focused again.
"I'm fine. Let's continue."
The patient stabilized in the fourteenth minute.
A perfect medical success.
But Arben didn't know that on his computer,
a false accusation was already waiting for him—
like a knife in the back.
The Morning of the Accusation
The next morning, the director urgently called him to the office.

Arben walked in, confused.On the table lay the forged documents.
"Doctor Arben… what is this?"
He looked at them.
His voice trembled.
"I didn't write these… this is… fake."

Dr. L.K. stood in the corner of the office with his arms crossed and a faint, disgusting smile on his face.
“And the signature?” he asked.
“It’s forged!” Arben protested.
But his vision began to darken.

His mind started betraying him.
The director looked at him with suspicion.
“This is a very serious matter, Doctor. If you made a protocol error and are trying to cover it up, there will be serious consequences.”
The voices began to mix.
The room started spinning.
He saw them again.
The three boys from the dormitory.
The iron door slamming shut.
Hands grabbing him.Laughter.
Blows.

Silence.
He could hear nothing else that might remind him he was in a hospital.
“No… no… please… don’t lock me in… don’t beat me… please… I didn’t do anything…”
he whispered, shaking his head, trying to control his breathing.
His voice trembled—cracked by fear and the terrible memories chasing him.The director stepped back slightly, startled by the sudden intensity.

“Doctor… what are you saying?!”
Dr. L.K. stepped forward, his gaze cold and cynical.
“You see?” he said sharply.

“He’s not stable enough for this position.”Arben trembled. His fists tightened, his heart pounding as if it would burst from his chest.Fear and childhood terror collided with every rational thought.
And every accusation, every doubt around him,awakened the shadows of the past—shadows he could no longer control. However, even as the trembling continued, a small part of him—small, but determined—rose from within.

A quiet inner voice whispered:

“This is not who you are.
This is the fear they want to see.
You are more than your memories.”

He took a deep breath and slowly lifted his head, trying to return to reality, trying to remain in the space where he could control every action and every word.

But the tension in the room remained heavy.

The walls seemed to close in with every breath, every step, every critical glance around him.

“I didn’t do anything… please… don’t take it away from

me… don't take my bread… please…"

he repeated, with the pleading voice of a frightened child.

The director urgently called the psychologist.

She entered immediately and walked straight toward Arben.

"Arben, look at me. Only at me. What you're seeing isn't real. You're in the hospital. You haven't done anything wrong."

She gently took his arm.

He was still trembling.

Slowly—

very slowly—

he began to calm down.

But this time it was different.

The psychologist turned toward the director.

"These documents are fabricated. I want IT to check the computer access logs. And I want a full investigation."

The director, embarrassed by his earlier reaction, nodded in agreement.

Dr. L.K. raised his eyebrows.

"We don't need drama," he said casually.
"Maybe I was wrong. Let's just drop the subject."
"Yes," the psychologist replied coldly.
"We do need clarity in this drama.
And you are part of it."
At that moment, for the first time,
the sabotage was uncovered.
And the real battle had just begun.
The Investigation – Uncovering the Truth
The hospital director, shaken by the events of the past few days, sat behind his desk and called an emergency meeting with the IT department and the psychologist.
He knew he couldn't allow such an incident to remain unresolved.
"We need to know exactly what happened with Arben's files," he said.
"We cannot live with doubts."
The psychologist, who had always been Arben's strongest supporter, made a firm decision.
"I will stay beside him throughout the entire process," she said.
"He hasn't done anything wrong. But his mind is still wounded by past trauma. We must be careful."
Arben sat beside them, his trembling hand resting on the

table.His heart was pounding.But this was not the usual fear.It was the tension of waiting for the truth.

The IT Analysis – Tracing the Documents

The IT team began analyzing Arben's computer: login records, document changes, and every suspicious activity. After about two hours, a shocking discovery appeared.

"Look at this," the technician said, pointing at the monitor. "The document was created by another user—logged in from Dr. L.K.'s workstation. He accessed Arben's folder at 10:45 PM… at the exact time Arben was in the emergency room."

The director raised his eyebrows.

"This is unacceptable," he said firmly.

"Dr. L.K.—there is no explanation for this."

The psychologist tried to calm Arben, who was visibly tense and emotional.

"Look," she said softly, "this is justice. The truth is coming out. This is your moment—but you must remain calm."

The Confrontation

The director immediately summoned Dr. L.K. to the office. He entered with a faint smile.

But the smile vanished when he saw the entire group waiting: the director, the psychologist, and Arben.

"Dr. L.K.," the director said coldly,

"There is evidence that you falsified documents and attempted to sabotage your department chief. How do you explain this?"

L.K. fell silent.

The confidence in his voice disappeared.
"I… I didn't…" he began, then stopped.
The psychologist stepped closer.
"There is no 'I didn't.' The logs are right here. Computers don't lie."
Arben took a deep breath.His voice was calm—but powerful.
"I did nothing wrong. And I will not tolerate someone risking patients' lives for personal ambition."
The director looked at L.K.
"We are initiating disciplinary procedures immediately. You are suspended from the surgical department. A full report will be sent to the hospital board."
L.K. knew there was no way out.He stepped back, defeated and humiliated.
Release and ReflectionArben slowly sat down.His breathing became steady againHis mind—still shaken by the return of the terrible memories from childhood—now felt an unexpected sense of relief.
"Thank you," he said quietly to the psychologist.
"Thank you for standing by me."
"You deserve this release," she replied gently.
"But remember—this is only one battle. Others still remain… within you."Arben understood what had happened.
Not every battle is won with physical strength.
Some victories require calm, patience, and justice.
The shadows of childhood had not disappeared.But now he had a new weapon:
the strength to face them without drowning in them.

"The shadows of the past never truly disappear.
They simply learn to walk behind us.
We heal not when we forget them,
but when we dare to turn around and say:
You are no longer the masters of my soul."
The Return of the Shadows – A Test of Inner Strength

On the first night in his new home, silence filled every corner.
Streetlights filtered softly through the window.
Yet Arben felt something restless in the air.
Suddenly, memories of childhood—violence, humiliation, fear—rose again with unusual force.
"Father… the shouting… the violence…" his mind murmured.
At first, his body trembled and his breathing quickened.
It felt as if decades of pain had returned to fill his new home with the terror of the past.
But Arben paused.
He closed his eyes.
And for the first time, he embraced the feeling instead of running from it.

Every tremor.
Every painful memory.
He allowed them to exist without hiding.
Then he spoke to the shadows inside his mind—like a man learning to make peace with his past.
"I know you were part of my life.

I understand the pain and the fear.
But you don't control me anymore.
I am here. And I am strong."
The shadows slowly began to fade.
They did not disappear completely.
From time to time they returned—like reminders that tested him again and again.
But Arben was no longer afraid.

With every calm breath, with every clear thought, he grew stronger.
He realized that inner strength is not the absence of fearIt is the ability to act with calm and determination despite it.
For the first time, he felt his home not only as a physical shelter—
but as the center of his mind and spirit.
A place where he could rebuild himself and face every painful memory.
The shadows were still there.
But now they were powerless.
They could no longer interfere with his decisions, his peace, or his inner happiness.The next morning, Arben woke with a new sense of energy.
The house near the hospital was no longer just a place to live.
It had become a laboratory of inner strength—
a place where every dark memory could be faced and transformed into patience, wisdom, and stability.
"Every shadow that returns," he thought to himself,

"teaches me to become stronger.I am no longer a victim. And I never will be again." Philosophically, words like these teach a bitter truth: our worth is not determined by the voices of others—whether they are parents, friends, or society itself. What makes a person real is not the approval of others, but the strength to rise above ridicule, to recognize and accept one's mistakes, and to build an independent identity.From a scientific perspective, psychologists say that such experiences can leave deep marks on confidence and self-esteem. Yet they are not irreversible. Every individual has the power to reclaim control over their own story and create a stronger, fuller version of themselves.

And in the end, one might say:
The words that wound the soul do not define your value. Who you are—and who you can become—does not depend on the mockery of others, but on your courage to move forward and to rebuild yourself from the ashes of contempt. His mother would sit quietly in the corner, her hands cracked from endless work and her tired eyes filled with tears she never dared to release. The only thing she did was leave a piece of warm bread for her son when he returned home from school in the evening.
He was a boy who dreamed.
At graduation he finished first in the entire district—
a powerful blow against every prejudice,
a silent slap against the insults, abuse, and injustice that had followed him for years.
Then came medical school.

A new life began in the big city, though he had no one there either. He lived in a tiny room in the student dormitory, a place that often felt more like a storage closet than a bedroom. At night he worked in a bakery, and during the day he attended lectures with blind dedication.

He slept little.
He ate little.
But he learned a great deal.
One day during his third year, a well-known professor at the faculty noticed him. After the lecture, he called him aside.
"You have something others don't," the professor said.
"You have fought harder than anyone to get here. These books don't teach what life has taught you. Keep going, Arben. One day you will become a great doctor."
Those words lodged deep in his heart and gave him wings.
Years passed. Through extraordinary effort he earned a specialization in cardiology. He spent long hours in the operating room—strong as iron, tireless. Senior doctors began to respect him. Patients began to trust him.
And now here he was.
Standing in the corridor of Mother Teresa Hospital, holding the keys to his new office as Chief of Cardiology.

An achievement that once seemed impossible in his childhood.
He stepped inside, looked at his spotless desk, the window where a ray of sunlight entered, and slowly leaned back in

his new chair.
For the first time in his life, he felt that life had finally given him what he deserved.His breathing eased.
His eyes filled with tears.
But this time not from pain.
From triumph.
Yet the moment he sat down in his new chair, a cold wave ran through his spine. The sunlight from the window seemed to fade.
It was that familiar moment—
when memories, like living shadows, rise before your eyes without asking.
Violence.
Insults.
Screams.
Endless bullying.
His vision blurred and reality dissolved. Suddenly he was no longer the Chief of Cardiology, but a frightened little boy standing in the hallway of the Librazhd dormitory.
The shadows returned.
“Hey, come here, you peasant!” shouted one of the older boys.
Arben, thin and terrified, tried to walk faster to avoid them, but he didn’t make it. A strong hand grabbed his collar and slammed him against the wall.
“Who told you that you could eat before the others? Didn’t they teach you the rules of the city in that miserable village of yours?”
He trembled but said nothing. When he finally opened his

mouth, the others burst into laughter.

"Look at him—his legs are shaking like a rabbit's!" another one shouted.
Then the kicks came.
Hard blows to his ribs, his back, his legs.
At last they left him crumpled against the wall, laughing.
Little Arben curled into himself like a small ball, his hands over his head, trying not to cry.
But the tears came anyway.
"Don't cry, or they'll know you're weak," his mother once whispered at home—without knowing he had already lost the ability not to cry.
And the memories would not stop.
He saw himself in the forest, his torn backpack on his shoulders, crying along the long road to school. He heard the night groans when his drunken father slammed the door and he hid under the bed. He saw his mother's silent pleading eyes.

Violence never leaves you in peace.

It stays.
It waits.

Then a voice was heard outside.
Doctor Arben returned to reality, covered in cold sweat. His nails had dug into his palms so hard that the skin had turned red. His heart was racing—fast, far too fast.
The bitter irony of a cardiologist who could not calm his

own heartbeat.
He knew exactly what this was.
Trauma.
A panic attack.
The scar of an old violence that never truly disappears.
He stood up, placed both hands on the desk, and struggled to breathe.

"You're safe now. You're an adult. You're the head of the clinic," he whispered to himself.But the voice of the inner child—the boy who once trembled in that dormitory—whispered back:
"They never finished with you.
They still live in your mind."
This was his hardest battle.
Not the operating room.
Not the patients.
But himself.
A wound of the mind that no scalpel could close.
And in that moment he felt it clearly:
Despite the achievements, despite the titles, the violence of the past was still inside him like a hidden animal that could awaken at any moment.

But this time he decided not to run.
Not to hide.
Not anymore.
He closed his eyes and swore he would fight this wound—once and for all.After that heavy moment in his office, Arben

thought it would pass quickly. He tried to focus on work, reviewing patient files and the list of daily procedures. But every chart he opened, every heartbeat he listened to through his stethoscope, brought back a thread of anxiety.
In the operating room he was known for his calm. Cold. Precise. Unshakable.But that day, as they prepared for an emergency bypass on an elderly patient, something inside him broke.
"Doctor, we're ready," the nurse said.
Arben put on the sterile gown, placed the mask over his face, and entered the operating room. The bright surgical lights struck his eyes.For a moment—just a moment—he saw himself again in the dormitory corridor, being pushed and beaten.
When he held the scalpel, his fingers began to tremble.
"Doctor, everything alright?" a young surgeon asked.
Arben said nothing. He tried to breathe. Just breathe.
But the room felt smaller and smaller, as if the walls were closing in. The sounds of the machines turned into echoes of the laughter of the boys who had mocked him long ago. Darkness.For the first time in his life, he realized something terrifying:
He could no longer escape it. He had to face it.
Doctor!" the nurse called again.
Arben took a step back. His mask filled with fog from his rapid, uneven breathing. He bent forward and placed his hands on the metal table, as if searching for something to hold on to.
A sudden feeling of suffocation overwhelmed him.

"Everyone out!" the chief anesthesiologist ordered immediately, realizing that something was terribly wrong. "Call another surgeon!"
Arben walked out of the operating room exhausted, numb. His steps felt heavy, as if the floor itself were pulling him down. He made his way to the staff lounge and collapsed into a stiff chair, holding his head in his hands.He knew exactly what was happening.An acute anxiety attack—born from a deep, old trauma that had never truly been treated.The next day he knocked on the door of the hospital psychologist. She had always been kind to him and had helped him many times before. She was a woman in her fifties, with gentle eyes and a calm voice.
As always, she welcomed him warmly.
"Sit down, Dr. Arben," she said softly. "I was told you had another serious episode. How are you feeling?"
He remained silent for a long time… a very long time.
Then suddenly his nails dug into his palms as tears began to fall quietly onto his hands.

"I… have fought my whole life," he whispered at last. "But I think the past has never really left me. I feel like I'm breaking… and I don't want to break. Not now… not after everything it took to get here."
The psychologist listened carefully, without interrupting, without judging.
"Arben," she said gently, "from the very beginning I have been on your side—and I still am. And we will heal this

together. The violence you experienced did not end simply because you grew up. It still lives inside you. And now it's time to bring it out of the darkness—not with force, but step by step."
He slowly raised his head.
For the first time, he felt a small sense of relief.He had found someone who truly listened.
Someone who did not humiliate him.

Someone who did not hurt him.
Someone who could see the invisible wounds.
And so his second journey began:
The emancipation of the soul.
Therapy was not easy. In fact, it was the hardest thing Dr. Arben had ever done—harder than medical school, harder than his specialization.
Quietly, she told him:"We're going to enter rooms inside your mind that you've kept locked for years. Some are dark. Some are painful. But if we never open them, they will continue to haunt you."He trembled.
But he agreed.The Second Session
The psychologist began with a breathing exercise.
"Your heart is speaking to you, Arben. Let's listen to it without fear."
He closed his eyes.Suddenly he was back on the damp forest path between the village and the town. He saw himself as a child again, carrying a torn backpack, running in fear from his father's shouting. Every step of that road was a wound. Tears filled his eyes.

He could not speak.
"Arben," the psychologist said softly, "you are not that child anymore. Now you have the right to give a voice to the boy who once stayed silent out of fear."
He took a deep breath and whispered:
"I wanted to scream… but I never had the courage."
That was the first lock that opened.
Another Session
The psychologist asked him to write a letter to the little boy he once was.
"How would you speak to him today?"
Arben thought deeply. He stared at a fixed point in the room. His hand trembled, but finally he began to write.
"I'm sorry no one protected you.
I'm sorry you had to fight alone.
None of it was your fault.
You weren't weak.
You were just a child."
When he read the words aloud, his voice broke.
"I'm sorry no one heard you… You were alone…"
He couldn't continue.
His body was shaking.
He had to stop several times.
The psychologist looked him straight in the eyes and said:
"For the first time, you are giving that child the love he never received."
Arben leaned back in the chair and closed his eyes. It felt as if someone was slowly lifting a weight he had carried on his shoulders his entire life."Today is the day of truth," she

told him gently. “Don’t stop. Don’t keep anything inside. That’s how healing begins.”
Another Session – Breaking the Wall of Silence
During a difficult moment, the psychologist asked him:
“Why do you think the beatings, the insults, and the mockery have followed you for so long?”

He froze completely. He said nothing.
After a minute he finally spoke.
“Because I thought I deserved them… because I believed I was unwanted.”“And now?” she asked, looking directly into his eyes. “What do you think now?”He raised his eyes for the first time without hesitation.
“Now I think they were wrong,” he said quietly.
“Not me.”
That sentence was a victory.
The Final Session – Catharsis
The psychologist decided to take him deeper.“I want you to close your eyes and tell those who hurt you what you were never able to say back then.”

At first his voice trembled.
“Why did you do this to me?”
Then louder:
“I wasn’t to blame!”
And finally, with tears flowing freely:
“I have value! You could never destroy my life! You have no power over me anymore!”
When he opened his eyes, his breathing had calmed. His

hands were warm. His forehead was dry.
For the first time in his life, he did not feel shame.
He felt release.
After Each Session
He left the office exhausted, but lighter.
He began to sleep better.
To breathe deeper.
To walk with more confidence.
Patients began to notice the difference.
The nurses saw that he seemed calmer.
The operating rooms no longer felt so suffocating.
The trauma had not disappeared.
But he was learning how to soften it.
To put it in its place.
To stop letting it control his life.
The Incident at the Hospital – The Explosion
The usual quiet of the morning filled the operating room—the cold silence that exists just before a scalpel touches living flesh.

Arben was focused on the patient. It was a delicate procedure that required steady hands and a clear mind. The assistants prepared the instruments while he reviewed the test results and the scan one last time.But behind the scenes, two colleagues—the same ones who had always envied him—were quietly poisoning the day.
One had deliberately rearranged the surgical instruments.
The other had removed a small detail from the analysis report, making it appear as if Arben had forgotten a routine

check.
Their goal was simple.
One small mistake would be enough to make him look incompetent. When Arbeni noticed the absence of a material, his face drained of color. An internal shock hit him like lightning. For a second, the room filled with a distant noise, as if an invisible door had swung open in his memory.
Where is the gauze? Who took it? — His voice began to tremble slightly. No answer. Then… it happened.
Something inside him snapped. He started breathing rapidly, his vision dimmed at the edges, and suddenly he was no longer in the operating room. He was a child again. He was in the school hallway where three boys had shoved him against a door and kicked him. He was in the dark room where they had taken his food, leaving him hungry just to mock him. He was in the alley behind the school, pleading for mercy, while a hard fist struck his stomach. The surgical room vanished. Shadows returned. He began speaking in a strained voice, eyes fixed on the floor as if seeing another reality:
"Please… don't hit me… Don't take my bread… Please, not again… Don't lock me in there…"Instruments slipped from his hands. The assistants froze. One of the surgeons hurried out, muttering:
"We warned you, he's unstable… He shouldn't be here…"
Another watched with secret satisfaction: the other man's breakdown was his triumphArbeni began to shake, hands trembling, flailing his arms as if trying to push away some

threatening presence:
"Don't lock me in! Don't lock me in! Not again! No!"
Someone urgently called the hospital psychiatrist. She entered briskly and ordered:
"Turn on the lights! Remove the instruments! Give him space!"

She approached Arbeni slowly, with a calmness that seemed almost supernatural.
"Arben…" she said softly. "You're in the hospital. No one can touch you. No one is following you. You're safe."
But he continued seeing the shadows.
"No… they're here… they're hitting me… Don't let them take my food…"She knelt before him, placing a hand on his shoulder and speaking slowly to match his ragged breathing:
"Listen to my voice… only my voice. Breathe. I'm here. Nothing is happening to you. Those are memories, not now… none of them can touch you anymore."
Gradually, his breathing began to stabilize. His eyes refocused. It was as if a thick curtain lifted from his mind, and he saw reality again.
He shivered, lowered his head, and began to cry silently.
"I'm sorry…" he murmured. "I didn't mean to…"
The psychologist put a hand on his shoulder.
"You don't have to apologize. Trauma doesn't choose its timing. You fought alone for so many years. Now you're not alone anymore."
Outside the operating room, the two doctors who had

hoped to sabotage him exchanged worried glances: this wasn't just an outburst. It was something that could turn against them.

No one had expected that Arbeni—the man who always stayed silent and endured—would finally… remember.

Collision with Childhood — A Full Return to Memory

In the recovery room, after the outburst in the operating theater, Arbeni sat on the white bed, his hands still trembling slightly. The psychologist remained nearby, careful not to overstep. A dim light filtered through the window, casting a shadow on the floor that, for him, was terrifying.

Because he knew what was coming.

"Arben… I want you to breathe with me. You're safe. You're here."

But it wasn't enough. Something inside him was opening—a heavy door he had locked for years with silence and shame. And now, that door opened on its own. Without his permission.

Suddenly, his eyes clouded, and the room vanished. He was no longer a man. Not a doctor. Not an adult.

He was eight years old again.

The School Hallway — The Beginning of Hell

He ran down the dark corridor of the old school, hearing their voices behind him, mocking laughter.

"Hey, come back here, little dog!"

His small feet slipped on the wet tiles. He felt a hand grab his shirt, yanking him behind the door of an empty classroom.

They locked him in. Darkness. His small breaths came in

gasps. He sank to the floor, hugging his knees.
“Why are you doing this?” he asked in a child’s voice.

They laughed. The window on the door opened, and one of the boys sneered:

“Because you’re weak. Because you don’t speak. Because you don’t resist. That’s why.”
They left him there for an hour while the teachers didn’t even notice.The Way Home — Stealing His Food
Then the memory shifted. It was winter. A cold day. He carried in his small bag a sandwich his mother had made—the only food he often had during the day.
Three boys followed him into the alley behind the community center.
What you got there?” one asked.
“Just bread…” he replied, clutching the bag tightly.
“Give it!” yelled another.They snatched it from his hands, knocked him to the ground, and began eating the sandwich before his eyes while he cried silently.“Leave me… just leave me… it’s mine… please…”
But they laughed, tossing pieces into the mud. He took what was left and wiped it off with his sleeves. He ate while crying because he was hungry. And no one—no one—heard him.
The Dark Room – The Worst Torture
But the ordeal didn’t end there.

They pushed him into an abandoned storage room behind

the school. They locked him inside and shut the door.
"Stay there until you learn your lesson!" someone shouted.

He screamed:
"I'm scared! Don't leave me here! Please! Please!"
Knocks on the door. Laughter. Then silence.
He clutched his stomach because it had been beaten hard before. Pain pierced him slowly. The air felt heavy. He began speaking to himself:
"I'll get out… I'll get out… I just need to stay calm… I don't want to make them angry… I'll stay calm…"

But no one came. Only night came. And that's when the trauma took root. Trauma that followed him his entire life. Trauma that now erupted in the operating room.
Return to the Hospital
The psychologist's voice finally penetrated the darkness of his memory.
"Arben… You're here. It's over. It's over. No one will hurt you."
He opened his eyes. Tears had streamed down his face. He whispered:
"I remember… every thing… every scream… every blow…"
The psychologist wiped his tears with a tissue.
"These are no longer your enemies. They are memories seeking healing. And you are no longer a child. You are no longer alone."
For the first time, he felt the weight of her words—and

realized that confronting the past had just begun. To heal, he had to revisit the memories he had buried for years.

Clash with Colleagues – Facing His Shadows

After the violent episode in the operating room, the news spread quickly through the wards. Some doctors were concerned, some suspicious, but others—especially those who resented his rapid rise as head of cardiothoracic surgery—saw an opportunity to take him down.

One of them, Dr. L.K., known for jealousy and arrogance, entered the staff room where Arben was drinking a glass of water. He was still exhausted, his hands trembling slightly.

"You brought us shame today, boss," L.K. said with a frozen smile. "Your brain left the room. Almost left the patient in our hands."

Arben lifted his head but said nothing.

"You're not over it yet," another surgeon interjected mockingly. "As a boss, you have to be strong… Or maybe this position is too big for you."

The others murmured. There were three of them, and the atmosphere grew tense."Today you proved you're not capable," added another, eyes fixed on him.

A cold shiver ran down Arben's spine. The voices, the words, the attitudes—they weren't his colleagues. They were the boys from the dorm."You're weak!"

"You're worthless!"

"You don't belong here!"

His mind started to mix past and present. The room began to shrink, just like the storage room where he had once been locked. The colleagues' voices started to sound like

the taunts of children.
"Don't drop the bread!" he heard an old childhood voice.
Arben struggled to his feet, gripped by panic. His vision blurred, his breathing shortened. He saw the face of a colleague looking at him mockingly… but it was no longer the colleague. He was seeing one of his childhood tormentors.
"Please… don't hit me today…" he whispered, trembling, without fully realizing it.
The colleague raised an eyebrow.
"What are you saying, Arben?"
"Don't… don't take my bread… Please… not today…" Arben murmured, pushing his chair back as if bracing for a strike.
The voices in his ears grew louder.
"This guy's lost it!" one of the doctors said.
"Who even appointed this boss?!"

At that moment, the door slammed open. The psychologist entered.
"Enough!" she said with an authority no one in the room expected.
She approached Arben gently. "Arben… Is what you're seeing real? Are you seeing them now?"
He trembled. His eyes filled with tears.
"Yes… they're here… there are three… they've got me… they're going to hit me…" His voice broke.
The psychologist turned to the colleagues with a cold stare.
"Do you see this? He's experiencing a dissociative episode.

This is severe trauma, not weakness. None of you have the right to attack him for this!"
They froze. They hadn't expected this.
She turned back to Arben.
"Arben, you are with me. They are not here. We are in the hospital. You are safe. No one will touch you."
He struggled to breathe but gradually began to see her face, not the shadows.
"Are they gone?" he asked, like a child.
"Yes," she said softly. "They're gone. And they won't come back today."
He lowered his head and cried silently, just as he had in the storage room.
Aftermath
The hospital faced the truth. The ward director was called immediately. The psychologist reported:
"This episode is not a random disorder. It's the result of severe childhood trauma. He needs support, not attacks."
The colleagues, ashamed and caught completely off guard, stood speechless—eye to eye, bodies frozen by the sudden revelation of Arben's experience. The contrast between their silence and the tension in the room was stark. They finally realized that their ways of belittling him had pushed Arben to a dangerous crisis, a moment where his nerves and boundaries had been seriously threatened. Some looked at each other with guilt and fear, while others tried to hide the shame covering their faces. The director, cold and resolute, broke the silence with a tone that left no room for discussion:

"From today, no one has the right to provoke, humiliate, or challenge him. Any violation will result in immediate disciplinary action."
His words fell over the room like a sharp decree, creating a new balance of power. Silence deepened as a sense of responsibility and fear spread among the colleagues. They understood this was not just a formal warning; from now on, every action had consequences, and Arben's ability to defend himself could no longer be ignored
The psychologist approached carefully and took Arben by the arm. He felt her warmth and support—a stark contrast to the unbearable tension he had just experienced. His breathing gradually calmed as she guided him out of the room, offering a sense of safety and care, helping him slowly return from the brink of crisis toward stability and self-control.

"Arben, we will continue therapy. This was a difficult step, but an important one. Because now the trauma is no longer hidden. Now it can begin to heal."
He followed her in silence, tears still wet on his cheeks. But for the first time… he did not feel alone.
Sabotage – The Shadow of a Man Determined to Take Him Down

After the incident, the hospital seemed calm on the surface, but inside the walls, friction, tension, and whispers persisted. Some doctors began to distance themselves from Arben, some watched him with suspicion, but one in

particular had decided to use his vulnerability as a weapon. His name was Dr. L.K.—a talented surgeon, but notorious for blind ambition. The man who believed the head position should be his, not "the kid who came up from the streets." After the episode, he approached a few colleagues with a cold tone:
"A man who sees ghosts cannot lead a ward." And he laughed.
But words alone weren't enough. He had a plan.

The Night of Sabotage

It was 10:30 p.m. Arben was on night duty. The psychologist had recommended rest, but due to staff shortages, he had to stay. On his table sat calming herbal tea, a notebook, and several patient files.
Dr. L.K. knew this. He had hidden in the supply room minutes earlier, waiting for the right moment.
An emergency alert flashed on the surgery monitor: a patient in cardiac arrest. Arben immediately jumped up and ran to the OR. Meanwhile, L.K. entered Arben's office. He opened the computer and created a fake report:
"During the dissociative episode, Dr. Arben applied the wrong protocol for patient X, endangering the patient's life…"
L.K. sent the draft to the hospital's internal files with a retroactive date. Then he took two more sheets and forged Arben's signature with terrifying skill. Calmly, he left as if nothing had happened.

In the Emergency Room
Arben entered, fully focused. The patient was a 27-year-old man with an extremely weak pulse. Arben executed the procedures with precision, placed the defibrillator, administered adrenaline, and monitored the rhythm.

Everything was going perfectly.
But then, as he gave instructions, he heard an imaginary voice—a childhood scream:"Oh, here comes the crazy one!"

Arben lifted his head for a second, confused. His heart raced. The nurse noticed.
"Doctor? Are you okay?"
He drew a deep breath, pushed the shadow of childhood aside, and refocused.
"I'm fine. Let's continue."
The patient stabilized in fourteen minutes—a remarkable medical success. But Arben didn't know that on his computer, a fabricated accusation awaited him like a knife in the back.
Morning of the Accusation
The next morning, the director summoned him urgently to the office. Arben entered, unaware of anything. On the desk lay the forged documents.
"Dr. Arben… what is this?"He saw them. His voice trembled.
"I didn't write these… they're… fake…"
Dr. L.K. stood in the corner with arms crossed and a slight, repulsive smile.

"And the signature?" he asked.
"It's forged!" Arben protested, but his vision started to blur. His mind began to betray him.
The director looked at him suspiciously.
"This is a serious problem, Doctor. If you made a protocol error and are trying to cover it up, there will be severe consequences…"
Voices began to swirl. The room started to spin. He saw the three boys from the dorm again. The iron door closing. Hands grabbing him. Laughter.

"No… no… don't… don't lock me… don't hit me… please… I didn't do anything…" he whispered, shaking his head.
The director recoiled.
"Doctor, what are you saying?!"
Dr. L.K. stepped closer with cynicism.
"See? He's not fit for this position."
Arben trembled.
"I didn't do anything… don't take it… don't take my bread… please…" he said again, transformed into a child. This was the reality that had pierced his mind.
The director urgently called the psychologist. She entered immediately and went straight to Arben.
"Arben. Look at me. Only at me. What you are seeing is not real. You are in the hospital. You haven't done anything wrong."
She took him by the arm as he shook, until slowly—very slowly—he calmed down. But this time, it was different…

The psychologist turned to the director."These documents are fabricated. I want IT to check the computer logs. And I want a full investigation."
The director, embarrassed by his hasty reaction, agreed. L.K. raised an eyebrow.
"No need for drama… or more investigations," he said.
"Yes, we do," the psychologist said coldly. "And you are part of this drama."
At that moment, for the first time, something tangible began to change. It was like a small light piercing through the fog… The Daily Injustice

For the first time, a sense of justice was taking action—not as a distant concept or empty words heard in lectures, but as something immediate and real. Actions that had gone unpunished until now were met with swift consequences; every provocation, every humiliation that had filled the room with tension was now met with a decisive response. It was a moment when the leader's words were not merely warnings—they were law in action, a measure that quickly corrected imbalance and controlled the risk of further abuse or degradation.
In the tension-filled, fear-laden air, Arben felt support and protection for the first time. He was no longer facing mockery and ignorance alone; justice was intervening quickly and concretely. It was a strange moment—a combination of strength, relief, and respect—where everything that had once seemed unfair transformed into a new, powerful balance.

The Sabotage is Exposed
And the real battle was only beginning.
Investigation – Uncovering the Truth
The hospital director, shaken by the recent events, sat behind his desk and called an urgent meeting with IT and the psychologist. He knew he couldn't allow such an incident to go unresolved.

"We need to know exactly what happened with Arben's files. We can't be left with doubts," he said.The psychologist, who had always been Arben's strongest supporter, made a decision:
"I will stay by his side throughout this process. He has done nothing wrong. But his mind is still affected by past trauma. We must proceed carefully." Arben sat beside them, his trembling hand on the table. His heart pounded—not from ordinary fear, but from the tension of waiting for the truth.Accessing IT – Tracking the Documents
IT began analyzing Arben's computer, checking access logs, document changes, and any suspicious activity. After about two hours, they uncovered shocking evidence:
"Look at this," IT said, pointing at the monitor. "This document was created by another user, logged in from Dr. L.K.'s workstation. He accessed Arben's folder at 10:45 p.m., right when Arben was in the emergency OR."
The director raised his eyebrows.
"This is unacceptable! L.K., there is no excuse."
The psychologist tried to calm Arben, who was tense and emotional.

"See… what we've uncovered is justice in action," she said softly. "The truth is coming out. This is your moment, but you must stay calm."

Summoning Dr. L.K.

The director immediately called L.K. into the office. He entered with a faint smile that vanished when he saw the entire team waiting: the director, the psychologist, and Arben.

"Dr. L.K.," the director said coldly. "There is evidence that you falsified documents and attempted to sabotage your superior. How do you explain this?"

L.K. was silent. His confident voice and demeanor disappeared.

"I… I didn't… do it—" He stopped, staring in disbelief.

The psychologist stepped closer.

"You did do it. The logs are there. Computers don't lie." She slammed the documents onto the desk. "A deceitful fraud."

Arben took a deep breath. His voice was calm but firm:

"I did nothing wrong. And I cannot tolerate anyone risking patients for personal ambition."

The director looked at L.K.:

"We will begin disciplinary procedures. Immediate removal from the surgery ward. Full report to the hospital board."

L.K. knew he had no escape. He withdrew, defeated and humiliated, leaving the office with his head down. He said nothing to anyone…

Relief and Reflection

Arben sat down. His breathing slowed. His mind, which

had just relived the terrifying memories of childhood, now felt a sudden relief.

"Thank you," he whispered, only to the psychologist. "Thank you for staying with me."

"You deserve this release," she said. "But remember, this is just one battle. Others remain to be faced… within yourself."

Arben realized something profound: not every battle is won with physical strength. Some victories require calm, patience, and justice. The shadows of his childhood were not gone—but now he felt he had a new weapon: the strength to face them without being overwhelmed.

Night of the Shadow – Confronting the Past

It was three in the morning. The surgery ward was quiet; only the monitoring machines ticked, a mechanical rhythm that offered little comfort to Arben. He remained in his office, reviewing patient files for the next day, but his mind was elsewhere.

The stillness of the night and the unusual silence of the hospital opened the doors to memories he had long tried to suppress… Suddenly, a deep tremor ran through him. A distant echo of children laughing, small fists striking him, and the screams of violence seemed to rise from the walls.

He stood up from the chair, his hands trembling on the desk. The dim lights cast shadows—shadows that looked just like the ones he had seen years ago in the dormitory in the town of Librazhd."No… don't hit me… Don't take my bread… Please…" he whispered, his voice shaking and low, becoming a child again.

In his perception, the room darkened. For a moment it was

no longer a hospital office. It was the school corridor again, the iron door, the abandoned storage room. The older boys were mocking him once more.But this time he held himself together. He did not lose control. He returned to reality. The psychologist was doing her job, and he was improving.
The Final Confrontation – L.K. Faces the Truth
The day was warm and the morning light poured into the hospital corridors. After the discovery of the falsified documents, L.K. sat in the staff lounge with several colleagues, trying to maintain his confidence. But deep down he knew everything had turned against him. The investigation had uncovered clear evidence, and the director had already decided on disciplinary measures.
Arben entered the room quietly, but with steady eyes. He was no longer trembling with fear. The shadows of childhood were no longer holding him back.
Now he was the chief. A professional. A determined man.
Dr. L.K.," he said calmly, but firmly. "We need to talk."
L.K. lifted his head with a restrained smile, trying to appear arrogant. He pulled his hands from his pockets and looked Arben straight in the eyes.
"Arben… I don't understand why you're attacking me. It was a misunderstanding… just a technical mistake."
"It wasn't a technical mistake."
Arben stepped closer, holding his gaze.
"It was deliberate sabotage. You falsified documents to remove me from my position and you risked patients' lives."
L.K. tried to smile, but his voice trembled.
"That's not true… there's no proof…"

For a moment Arben felt dizzy. His head trembled slightly from the tension of the confrontation. The voices of the past echoed loudly in his mind—alive and merciless. His body relived every blow, every humiliation, as if it were happening again.
Suddenly the door opened and a pale light filled the room. The psychologist.
She entered calmly, approaching him with careful steps. She had stayed nearby because she knew the episode could return.
"Arben… you're here. They're not here. They cannot hurt you. Breathe with me… you're getting better."
She gently placed her hand on his shoulder.

He lifted his eyes, but what he saw were still not real faces—only the shadows of childhood that refused to leave him.
Her voice cut through the chaos in his mind, clear and steady.
"The memories are here, but you are no longer that child. There is no violence here. You are safe. No one can hurt you."
Slowly, the shadows began to fade.
His body, tense and contracted, started to release. His heart was still racing, but his breathing became deeper and steadier.
"It's over…" he whispered, exhausted.
"Yes," the psychologist said softly, wiping the tears from his face. "But now you've seen what was locked inside you. You'll tell me everything. And from this moment, we can

begin to heal these wounds."
He understood something important.
Shadows never disappear completely—but the strength to face them can be learned.

For the first time in many years, he felt a light sense of release.
A small step toward the peace he had searched for his entire life.
"Yes… I can," Arben said quietly.
"Because now I know the truth. You will help me heal. And now there are no shadows left that can frighten me."
At that moment the director appeared at the door, his expression firm.
"Dr. L.K., these are disciplinary procedures. They take effect immediately. Removal from the ward, a report to the hospital board, and a formal written warning."
L.K.'s face darkened. There was no escape now. Every manipulation had come to an end.
"You… won't win," he muttered weakly.
"You're a psychopath in a doctor's coat," L.K. added bitterly.
"Enough," Arben replied.

"I don't play games. I don't try to take someone's position dishonorably. I heal people—I don't sabotage them. And this hospital has no place for professional ego or cruelty."
Arben turned his back and walked out of the room.
Behind him, L.K. stood stunned, realizing that Arben had

won—not only professionally, but psychologically.
Justice and Transformation
The psychologist approached Arben in his office and said with a gentle smile:"There you are. Not only did you survive the shadow of the past—you also brought justice into the light for everyone to see."
Arben took a deep breath. A great sense of relief filled him. The shadows of childhood were still inside him—but they no longer controlled his life.
For the first time something was truly changing.

It was like a small light breaking through the fog of everyday injustice. Justice was finally taking action—not as an abstract concept discussed in lectures, but as something real.
Provocations and humiliations that once went unpunished were now being confronted immediately. The director's words were no longer warnings—they were law in action.
For the first time, Arben felt protected.
He was no longer alone.Transformation – The Birth of Inner Strength
After the recent events, the Cardiac Surgery ward became a calmer place. But the greatest change did not happen in the hospital walls.
It happened inside Dr. Arben.
He sat in his office watching the morning light enter through the windows. It wasn't just sunlight illuminating his desk and the patient files.
It was a new light within himself.

His mind, once burdened with childhood trauma and fear of violence, was learning a different way to function.
He understood something essential:
Trauma cannot simply disappear. But it can be managed. It can even become strength.Routine as Therapy
Arben began his days with strict discipline.
Patient monitoring.
File reviews.
Team meetings.
But instead of feeling pressure, the routine now felt calming—almost like a ritual.
"Every decision I make today," he thought,
"is not about escaping the violence of the past…
but about saving lives." The words flowed through his mind like a silent refrain, a reminder of the heavy responsibility resting on his shoulders. He knew that every decision, every action, could change someone else's fate; it could prevent a fracture, an injury, or perhaps even save a life from the abyss of violence.
In that moment, he realized that his power was not merely a tool of control or authority—it was a sacred duty: to act with justice and determination, eyes open to consequences, heart filled with care. There was no room for haste or vengeance; everything was a matter of life and death, a true test of character.
As his thoughts continued to flow, he understood that true justice was not a sudden, impulsive act. It was a measured, deliberate action—carefully chosen—that could alter the

destiny of those who had no voice to protect themselves. Every choice he made now was a bridge between a painful past and a future where life could have another chance.

In the Operating Room

When the surgical lights came on and the hum of machines intensified, he felt a calm he had never known. His heart raced, not from fear, but from the controlled adrenaline of his profession. He placed his hands on the patient, his mind focused, while the shadows of his past lingered—not as threats, but as reminders of how to avoid fear.

He had learned to confront the shadows of his past. The past would never disappear; it was up to him to rise above it.

Interacting with the Team

A profound change had occurred in his relationship with colleagues. Arben no longer imposed authority through fear or loud commands. Now, his authority came naturally—from respect and example.

He listened carefully, asked questions to understand others' perspectives, collaborated, and guided the team without unnecessary tension. It was an environment where every idea and concern had space for discussion—and, when needed, implementation.

"How are you feeling today with the new patient?" he asked a young nurse, with calm and genuine interest."I'm good, Doctor. Thank you for helping me understand the protocol," she replied, feeling not just support, but also

respect and trust in his eyes.
It was a small moment, but powerful. The nurse felt she was not facing orders but a leader who listened and valued her.

Arben realized that true power does not come from imposing oneself on others, but from self-control, calmness, and the ability to inspire. He had reached a new level of leadership: earned respect, not fear. Every instruction, every suggestion he gave came from experience, wisdom, and inner resolve. And that made his team feel secure, supported, and motivated.
In the quiet of the hospital room, among the beeping machines and slow steps of nurses, Arben understood the real transformation: authority born from awareness, composure, and the ability to foster mutual respect. This was the kind of power that could save lives.
The Symbol of Inner Calm
At the end of the day, as the desks cleared and the hospital quieted, Arben sat once again in his office. His eyes fell on a small photo of his mother—a simple, strong woman who had given everything for him—and on a note from the psychologist:
"Power is not the absence of fear. It is facing fear with a calm heart."
He smiled faintly. Perhaps the shadows of childhood were not gone, but he had learned to converse with them, accept his wounds, and use every experience to help others.
"Today I am stronger than yesterday," he whispered to himself.

"It wasn't my fault what happened. But it is my responsibility—as a man and as a doctor—to do my best."
He understood something crucial: his inner transformation did not come from defeating others, but from mastering himself. The shadows were no longer enemies, but memories guiding him to become stronger, calmer, and more resolute for the lives of his patients—and his own.
Harnessing the Past
After recent events, the hospital appeared calm, but for Dr. Arben, every step inside was a new challenge. The shadows of childhood, his father's violence, and early abandonment had not disappeared. But he now saw them not as obstacles, but as reminders teaching him resilience.
He paused in the hospital corridor, its Soviet-era tile floors unchanged, before returning to his office to review patient files. Each file represented a life entrusted to him. This responsibility demanded calm focus and deliberate action. For the first time in years, Arben felt in control of his emotions. His breathing was deep, his body composed, his mind clear.
Reflecting on the Past

He recalled the long nights in the dormitory, the screams cutting into his ears like knives, the endless humiliation, and the hidden tears as he walked through the forest to reach the town, trying to hide his pain and terror. He remembered Dr. L.K., the sabotage and manipulation that left invisible scars on his spirit, and the inner violence that had consumed him during the night of confronting the shadows.

Every painful memory, every bitter experience, had pushed him to the edge of his limits.

But now, looking at himself in the mirror, feeling his breathing steady, he realized something important: he was no longer a victim. The shadows of the past no longer held power over his life.

"Now the shadows of the past don't scare me," he thought, with deep calm and inner resolve.

"They are part of me—but they do not control my life."

In that reflection, Arben felt a sudden release, a surge of strength and calm. Every painful memory now served as a lesson in patience, composure, and professional action. The pain of the past was no longer a barrier—it was a guide. Every difficult experience had strengthened his resilience and his ability to manage powerful emotions.

As he felt this strength grow within him, Arben realized that transformation did not come from vengeance or fear. It came from self-awareness and the power to control his reactions. The shadows of the past were no longer enemies, but teachers preparing him for future challenges. And for the first time, he felt free to move forward—strong from within and ready to face whatever life would bring.

Professional Transformation

In the operating room, Arben's inner strength revealed itself fully. He led the team with calm and determination, giving clear but non-arrogant instructions. There was no need to impose authority—the respect he earned came naturally. "Check the patient's vitals," he said in a calm tone. "Then report back any changes to me."

The nurses and colleagues watched him with admiration. They felt a new energy, a stability rarely seen. Arben was no longer the scared child. He was now the head of the ward, a doctor who could manage extreme situations without losing composure.
A calmness born from within allowed him to return stronger than ever as the top doctor of the unit. He was in control everywhere.

Evening Reflection
That evening, Arben sat again in his office. The soft light washed over his face, but he no longer felt panic or anxiety. This was inner calm, earned through facing sabotage, the shadows of his childhood, and the support of the psychologist.
"Every challenge," he thought, "is an opportunity to grow, stay strong, help others, and not let anyone knock me down."

He realized that true power did not come from dominating others but from mastery over oneself. The shadows were no longer enemies; they were memories that had helped him become stronger. Arben had learned to speak with them, to accept his wounds, and to use every experience to lead with determination, calm, and generosity.
At this point, Arben was no longer just a doctor—he had become a symbol of confronting the past and achieving inner transformation. He had found calm, authority, and strength that neither violence, sabotage, nor shadows could destroy.

After all those dark nights, the childhood shadows, his father's violence, and L.K.'s sabotage, Arben felt something new within himself. It wasn't merely the relief of being cleared from false accusations. It wasn't just the liberation from the shadows that had haunted him in the office at night. It was a deeper sensation: a powerful inner awareness that could no longer be broken.

He sat in his room as the pale morning light filtered over his face. It felt as if it were illuminating every corner of his soul that had remained in darkness for decades. He felt the timeless calm that comes from accepting the past, not avoiding it.

"The shadows," he thought, "no longer defeat me. They are not enemies. They are part of me—the memory that has made me strong."

Observing Himself and His Emotions

Arben began analyzing every emotion he had ever felt in life. Fear, violence, humiliation, isolation—they were no longer obstacles but hidden lessons. He realized that:

L.K.'s jealousy and sabotage had no power over him unless he allowed it.

His father's violence and his mother's abandonment had left scars, but those could be healed through awareness and calm.

The shadows of childhood could appear, but now Arben could talk to them, accept them, and manage the fear.

He embraced the idea that his power came from himself.

Every breath, every movement, and every thought that once scared him could now be transformed into energy for growth and composure.

Inner Liberation

When painful memories and shadows resurfaced, he reminded himself: They are the past. I am the present, I am the doctor. Arben learned not to fight against them. He acknowledged them, experienced them, and then watched them fade.

"It doesn't matter what happened," he whispered to himself. "What matters is what I choose to do now."

A sense of calm filled his body and mind. His heart no longer raced in panic; his thoughts were no longer chaotic. He understood that transformation did not mean erasing pain—it meant living with it, using it to build strength, resolve, and peace.

The Symbol of Inner Strength

At that moment, Arben was no longer a frightened child. He was no longer a victim of sabotage or violence. He was a man at peace with himself, with a new strength born from recognizing his wounds and learning to manage them.

He smiled softly to himself:

"Here I am. I am not broken. I am not a victim. I am stronger. My power comes from within."

The shadows of the past might still appear, but Arben now had the inner armor to face them: calm, patience, awareness, and determination.

Dr. Arben—Strength and Inner Calm

Dr. Arben sat in silence, feeling the weight of years on his shoulders. Childhood memories returned like wild waves: the screams, the violence, the humiliation. But this time, he was not afraid. This was a different moment. The shadows of the past no longer controlled him.

He felt the pain—but also the power that came from accepting it. Every scar, every minor torture, every loss from his youth had shaped the man he was now: strong, calm, and resolute.

"I am no longer a victim," Arben thought. "They are no longer my enemies. Neither the memories nor the shadows of violence. They are part of me, and now I can see them as lessons, not obstacles."

He felt his heart beating differently. His breath was calm, deep, and intentional. He realized that true power came from himself. He no longer needed to fight to defend against the past; it was enough to be present, aware, and to choose how to live with his memories.

"Every day, every choice," he said to himself, "is an opportunity to grow. To use everything I've experienced to help others, and to maintain calm within myself."

In the quiet of the room, Arben smiled softly—not a triumphant smile, but a smile of acceptance. He understood that his transformation did not come from erasing pain, but from mastering it and turning it into strength."I am stronger than the shadows of the past," he thought. "I am at peace with myself, and that is my greatest weapon."

In that moment, Dr. Arben felt the inner peace he had sought his entire life. The shadows might still appear, but

they no longer had power over his decisions, his heart, or his mind. He was ready to live truthfully and calmly, to lead himself, and to face any challenge life could bring. "I am here. I am no longer a victim. I don't need to run from these shadows. I am alive, and that's the only thing that matters," he whispered to himself.

The moment he fully accepted his memories, the shadows began to fade. They didn't disappear completely, but their terrifying power was gone. Dr. Arben's heart, which had been pounding wildly, calmed. His breathing became steady, controlled, deliberate.

He realized this was the true skill he had gained: the ability to accept and manage fear, pain, and dark memories, turning them into inner strength and calm.

"This is my greatest weapon," he said softly. "It's not about erasing the shadows… it's about facing them with composure and moving forward."At that moment, Dr. Arben felt an indescribable relief. The shadows might return, but they no longer had power over his mind, body, or decisions. He had tested his own strength and knew that no challenge, inside or outside, could topple him.

With this awareness, he smiled for the first time with complete serenity, feeling that a new version of himself had been born: strong, calm, and unstoppable by the shadows of his past.

Challenge on the Ward – Testing Inner Strength

It was a busy morning in the cardiothoracic ward. New patients were arriving in emergencies, and tension was rising in the operating room. One patient, an elderly

man with severe cardiac issues, was showing signs of destabilization and required immediate intervention.
Suddenly, a colleague attempted to interfere with his decisions, making risky suggestions and creating confusion within the team. A moment like this might once have shaken Dr. Arben, made him feel uncertain, frightened, and pulled back into the shadows of his past.
But not now. Arben felt the tension, acknowledged it, but did not give in. His breathing deepened. His heart raced, but the calm within him kept him focused.
"There's no time for unnecessary emotions," he thought. "Every decision now is a matter of life."

He acted decisively.

"Team," he said clearly and firmly, "follow the standard protocol. I will perform the procedure. No deviations from the plan. Every step will be checked and reported."
The tension in the room dissipated. The nurses and colleagues followed his instructions without hesitation. Arben had control over the situation—and over himself.
As the surgery began, every shadow of past pain faded into the background—the childhood fears, the violence, the threat of sabotage. They were still there as distant memories, but they no longer interfered. His focus was entirely on the patient, the heartbeat, and the critical decisions that had to be made.
The operation was a success. The patient's heart stabilized. The team looked at Dr. Arben with respect—not only for

his surgical skill, but for the calm and authority he radiated. After the operation, Dr. Arben sat for a moment, feeling physical exhaustion but also a profound sense of relief. He realized that the inner strength he had built was no longer an abstract concept. It was real, proven, and capable of keeping him focused even in the most challenging moments, even when accompanied by dark memories and the shadows of the past.

"This is how I live and work now," he thought. "With calm, determination, and the power that comes from within."

Recognition and Professional Success

His successful surgeries and accurate diagnoses elevated Dr. Arben to a new professional and personal level. His name appeared in international newspapers and prestigious scientific journals, earning him not just fame, but global respect. People acknowledged him with gratitude and awards without him asking for anything. Fame had never been his motivation; his only passion was medicine and saving lives.

His reputation attracted the attention of top hospitals in Germany, Switzerland, and across Europe, offering prestigious positions and opportunities for international research. Yet Arben remained committed to the hospital where he had begun, to the ward where he had endured long nights, feeling responsibility for the patients who had trusted him.

At the same time, he began building an international network, sharing his experience, and developing new

surgical techniques that saved hundreds of lives. Material wealth was a natural byproduct of respect and recognition, but for Arben, it mattered little compared to the happiness of every healed patient.

During this period, he understood that his transformation was not only professional. Every success reinforced an inner strength that could not be broken by sabotage or the shadows of the past. He was now a man at peace with himself—recognized, respected, and powerful—and this allowed him to look forward calmly, planning new steps, scientific projects, and ways to help more people.

Personal Independence

Professional success could not erase the shadows of his past. Memories of violence, humiliation, and abandonment from childhood still surfaced, often unexpectedly, disturbing the calm he had built over the years. Even fame, international recognition, and colleagues' respect could not heal those deep wounds hidden in his subconscious.

But Dr. Arben did not surrender. He took a new step: personal independence. Renting a home became the first symbol of this step. It was small, warm, and entirely his. Every corner was under his control, far from the painful memories of dormitories and old contexts.

The dormitory, where he had endured torture, abuse, and humiliation, was left behind. He visited it only with calm memories, no more pain than necessary. He felt free. Every step toward his new home was a step toward autonomy and control over his life.

In his new home, he established his own order, routines

that gave him peace. The small walls were filled with books, files, and positive memories; every object had its place and symbolized the power he had gained to organize his world inside and out.

Yet, the shadows never disappeared completely. They appeared at night, in silence, recalling the feelings of his childhood. But Arben was no longer powerless. He faced them calmly, seeing them as reminders teaching patience and strength. Every turbulent moment reinforced his awareness and stability.

True Independence

In this new stage, Dr. Arben realized that true independence did not come from fame, money, or professional position. It came from mastering his life, setting his own rules, and facing the shadows of the past without surrender.

He smiled to himself, feeling that now, for the first time, he was completely in command of himself, with a strength that no painful memory could break. His home was small, warm, and peaceful—a sanctuary giving him full autonomy and space to build his routines. Every day, he could go to the hospital, check on patients, and continue developing……operations, without the stress of the long, exhausting journey he had once endured from the village to the city.

In this new home, Dr. Arben established his own rules. Every morning began with breathing exercises, daily planning, and preparation for surgeries. Every object was carefully placed, symbolizing calm and control over his life. Books and scientific journals were part of the furnishings,

reflecting his passion and dedication to medicine.
But the shadows of the past did not disappear. Deep down, memories of the dormitory, childhood abuse, and humiliation sometimes resurfaced, stirring him for a brief moment. Yet now, Arben was no longer their victim. He faced them with calm and awareness: accepting them, seeing them as reminders that had made him strong, and then letting them go.
The house near the hospital became a symbol of his independence. It showed that he had taken control of his life, no longer subject to the arbitrary decisions of others, no longer living in fear of the shadows of his past. It was a sanctuary, a laboratory for his mind and spirit—a place where he could build himself, grow professionally, and confront every painful memory without breaking.
In this new phase, Dr. Arben realized for the first time that true calm and inner strength did not depend on fame or money, but on the ability to master his life and manage the shadows that returned only as memories of the past.

The Return of the Shadow – A Test of Inner Strength
"The shadows of the past never fully leave; you can reach the peaks of the world, but they walk behind you, always reminding you of who you were when they were born."
On the first night in his new home, silence enveloped everything. Streetlights filtered gently into the room, but Arben sensed something unusual. Suddenly, memories of his childhood—violence and humiliation—began to surface with unusual intensity.

"Father… the screams… the violence…" his mind murmured.

At first, his body trembled, and his breathing quickened. It felt as if decades of pain were returning to fill his new home with the terror of the past. But Arben, seasoned by every challenge, paused for a moment. He closed his eyes and embraced the feeling. Every tremor, every painful memory, he accepted—without fleeing or hiding.

He faced them calmly… and began to speak with the shadows in his mind, like a man learning to make peace with the past:

"I know you were part of my life. I understand the pain and fear. But you no longer control me. I am here, and I am strong. There's no reason for you to keep attacking me, anywhere, anytime."

In that moment, the shadows began to fade, though they did not disappear completely. They still appeared occasionally, as memories that continually tested him. But Arben was unafraid; every calm breath and steady thought gave him strength. He realized that inner power was not the absence of fear, but the ability to act with calm and determination despite it.For the first time, he experienced his home not just as a place for physical life, but as a center for his mind and spirit—a place where he could build himself and manage every painful memory. The shadows were present, but powerless: they could no longer interfere with his decisions, his peace, or his inner happiness.

In the morning, Arben awoke with a new sense of energy. The house near the hospital was no longer just a shelter; it was a laboratory for inner strength, a place where every dark memory could be confronted and transformed into lessons, patience, and stability.“Every shadow that returns,” he thought, “teaches me to be stronger. I am no longer a victim. I never will be.”

With this awareness, Dr. Arben experienced absolute calm for the first time, even though the shadows occasionally resurfaced. He had tested his inner strength and now knew that nothing could break him.

Living with the Shadows

He quickly realized that success in surgery was both a blessing and a test. His day began early, long before the hospital filled. He walked through the silent corridors, hearing only the tap of his shoes and the inner voice whispering: somewhere, in a dark corner, the shadows of the past waited again.

But he was no longer the same man. He had survived himself, and that made him stronger than any external enemy.

In the operating room, his hands were steady, like the surface of a cold morning lake. Every incision was precise, every rapid decision deliberate, and the patient’s heartbeat on the monitor seemed to harmonize with his own breathing. The medical staff watched him with admiration, some with envy, some with awe. There was something in Arben that went beyond talent—it was presence, focus, and deep thought that never betrayed him.

International newspapers began to mention him frequently: "The young Albanian surgeon defying mortality statistics." Scientific journals called him a "phenomenon," while some colleagues remarked that fate had gifted him a skill few in Europe possessed.

But fame came at a price. The more people valued him, the more the old shadows returned—those that had followed him from childhood, from violence no one saw, from injustices no one heard, from nights sleeping in terrifying silence in the dormitory, hearing only his own heartbeat and hoping for a better tomorrow.

Now he had a small home near the hospital—a quiet apartment with wide windows where moonlight fell on the floor. There, amidst frozen calm, he felt safe. It was a small physical distance from the hospital, but a giant psychological step away from past poverty and the noise of the dormitory.

In the evenings, after long days of difficult surgeries, he would stand by the window and watch the city below. The lights seemed to float in the darkness, while tiny figures moved like invisible shadows.

"How strange," he often thought. "The lights make people look safe, but inside they always hide a little darkness."

And that night, just when he thought he was finally gaining control over his mind, the shadows returned. Not as violently as before, but subtly. Voices reminded him of mistakes he hadn't made, fears he no longer belonged to, faces of people he had lost, words that were never spoken.

He sat on the sofa, holding his head in his hands, closing his eyes. But instead of calm, scenes from the past flashed before him—often disordered, hazy, like fragments of a film lost in darkness.
Then… nothing.
A deep breath. Silence. He immediately rose and turned on the lights in every room.
This was his instinct: light against darkness, action against fear, courage against silence. He would not let the shadows win.
The next day, he returned to the hospital as usual. Colleagues noticed something different in his eyes—a new determination. Some asked, but he gave no answer… He didn't need to.

The operating rooms filled once again with the harsh glow of surgical lights, the sterile scent of disinfectants, and the rhythmic hum of machines working like Swiss clocks. Arben entered the first operation with the same unshakable calm. Within those white walls, he felt invincible.

Patients were saved, one after another. His decisions became case studies. Photos of him began appearing in medical journals. Hospitals in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland started sending formal invitations.

He read them and simply smiled. Fame was growing. His name had become a point of reference for young surgeons. But inside him, far more important than glory, was the calm he was slowly building. He understood that every life

he saved was a powerful strike against the shadows of his past.

He did not erase the traumas—they remained—but he dominated them. They were a part of him, like shadows that never truly leave, walking behind every step toward the light.

At the end of that long day, as he left the hospital and headed toward his new home, Arben felt a strange sensation for the first time: perhaps—just perhaps—he was beginning to claim his life.

In a voice so low that only he could hear, he whispered:
"Shadows are driven away only by lighting the light within yourself."

Then his phone buzzed in his pocket—a call from Germany. It was an opportunity that could take him far from the shadows, far from the past that had always followed. But Arben knew it wasn't a place or a city that would save him; it was the power within himself, the light he had begun to ignite, that would finally end the shadow that had accompanied him all his life.

That spring morning, when Arben answered the call, the window of his house near the hospital was still misted from the night. He had stayed up late, reviewing a patient's analysis that had arrived as an emergency. He wasn't

expecting anyone—least of all an international call.The number on the screen was unknown.

"Guten Morgen, Herr Doktor Arbeni?" A crisp, decisive voice spoke. Arben raised an eyebrow. He recognized the faint Albanian accent hidden within the foreign cadence of the woman's speech.

"Yes, this is Dr. Arben."

"I'm calling from Universitätsklinikum Heidelberg. We've followed your work, particularly the two articles you published in the European Cardiac Journal. Our director wishes to invite you for an important collaboration—a project in reconstructive aortic surgery for which you've developed a new technique. Could you come for a presentation this Saturday at noon?"Arben was momentarily breathless. Heidelberg… one of Europe's most prestigious hospitals. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. A dream most surgeons think of but few touch.

"Yes… of course," he said, though his voice trembled slightly. "I'll be there."After hanging up, his hands shook faintly. Not from professional fear—but from a mixture of triumph and apprehension. He was close to something monumental, yet he felt the stirrings of the past under his skin, as if the shadows had sensed his success and were returning to claim their due.He glanced around the small room—bookshelves, patient files, the quiet daily order."It's time," he whispered.The Journey

Rinas Airport was bustling that morning. Arben carried only a small suitcase. He booked his ticket an hour after receiving the call—refusing to give himself time to doubt.

On the plane, as he tried to read documents about the German project, his eyes drifted shut. He slipped into a heavy, strange sleep—and there, deeper than ever, the shadows returned.He was eight years old again. Night three in the dormitory. He hadn't eaten. Older boys had taken his bread, laughing in their deep voices, pushing him into a corner. One struck his back, and he fell onto the concrete."Shut up, you're worthless," they always said.
Their shadows were longer than their bodies. Now those shadows pressed down over his face, constricting his throat.
"Don't… don't take it…" Arben muttered in his sleep.
Fortunately, the sharp roar of the plane's engines woke him. Cold sweat covered his brow. The flight attendant looked at him with concern.
"Alles gut?"
"Yes… I'm fine. Thank you."
But he wasn't fine. For a moment, he didn't know where he was. Reality and memory had merged like two rivers that could no longer separate. He closed his eyes. "You won't tighten your grip on me anymore," he told himself. "You are no longer my masters. I will forget you, shadows of my tragic past."

Heidelberg

The hospital was magnificent. Built of glass, light, and German precision. A world entirely different from the noisy corridors of Albanian hospitals. The clinic director

greeted him with a warm smile.
"We've read everything about your work, Dr. Arben. The techniques you used in recent surgeries… they are extraordinary."
Arben bowed his head, embarrassed. He was not used to open praise.
"We'd like you here for a few months as a visiting surgeon. You'll perform surgeries, train our team, and… if things go well, we'll build a permanent team."The word "permanent" struck him like lightning. A new life? A clean slate? A place where no one knew his history?He had to accept it. He had to follow his dream. But as he considered this, old shadows shifted in the corners of his mind, as if warning him—they hadn't left his inner battle.

The Presentation
In the conference hall, Arben was set to present his new surgical method. Dozens of surgeons, professors, students, and experts from across Europe sat before him. As the projector whirred to life, he felt his pulse riseThe voice of childhood whispered again, low and threatening:
"You're not good enough… we know you… you're the kid they used to beat.Arben lifted his head. For a moment, the room seemed to blur. Charts merged. Lights became too bright. His heart thudded like a drum.
"Doctor, are you alright?" a German assistant asked.
He drew a deep breath and forced himself back into the present.No. He would not let the shadows speak in his place. Not today.He began to speak. Calmly. Professionally.

With authority.
The more he explained, the clearer he felt each word pierce through the darkness that had followed him.
When he finished, the hall erupted in applause. The senior professor approached him and said,"You are not just talented… you were born for this."Arben thanked him, but inside, he felt a tremor not of excitement, but something deeper—something emerging from the depths of his old wounds. Silence in the Hotel and the Return of Shadows

That night, he stayed in the hotel room, watching the city lights. Heidelberg at night was calm, beautiful, and rich. Yet, as he sat in the chair by the window, he suddenly felt that which he had always feared:
That strange silence that always heralded the return of shadows.

The corners of the room darkened. The wall to his left seemed to shift slightly. The old voice—the one that had followed him all his life—spoke again:

"Arben… do you think you can escape us? Do you think fame will heal you? We are inside you."

He lifted his head. His breathing grew heavy. For a moment, he saw himself as a child, in the boarding school yard, running to escape the older boys. Empty stomach, tears, that old fear—he felt it all again.

But this time… he did not flinch. He did not hide.

"No," he said quietly. "I have not run from you. I have defeated you."

The shadow paused. Calm returned to the room. The light normalized.

Arben closed his eyes and took a deep breath. It was not a full victory, but it was a step.
A confrontation. A new beginning.

And tomorrow… he would return to the German hospital for his first international operation.
Tomorrow marked the start of his new era: The Emotional Rebirth.

Operation in Heidelberg

The morning of his first operation in Germany was cold, pristine, and silent. From the third-floor window of the clinic, Arben watched the fog slowly descend over the Neckar River. The city looked like a frozen postcard—a view calling for calm—but inside him, something was buzzing.

He was not just going to operate. He was going to be tested for the first time before a team that saw him as an extraordinary talent. And, at the same time, he was stepping

into a space where childhood shadows usually awakened old fear instincts.

When he entered the operating room, he noticed perfection: machines lined up like soldiers, monitors casting soft blue light, instruments gleaming under sterile lamps. The German team awaited him. The nurses looked at him with respect; some with curiosity.

"Guten Morgen, Dr. Arben," said the head nurse, a tall woman with blue eyes. "The patient is ready. Are you ready?"

Arben paused. A slight pang in his chest—a distant memory, like a child's scream in a dorm corridor. A small fear—not of the operation, but of himself.

He inhaled deeply.

"I'm ready," he said, his voice steady.

The Start of the New Path

The patient, a man in his fifties with an abdominal aortic aneurysm, was anesthetized. Monitors pulsed rhythmically. Arben donned his gloves, mask, and cap. Every time he performed this ritual, he felt as if he were stepping into another role—a role where he was no longer the bullied child, but the man saving lives.

As he made the first incision, something subtle and invisible happened: his body calmed, his mind cleared, and his hands moved with certainty. From that mBut at the critical moment, when he had to place the graft, what he feared appeared. A distant, familiar, harsh voice echoed in the depths of his mind:"You'll fail… You always fail… You are the one we pushed into cement…"Arben lifted his eyes for a moment. The operating room lights seemed to dim. An old shadow flickered at the edge of his vision. His body trembledHe knew what this was: the old return, the terrifying fall, the instant when trauma pulled him out of reality.

"Doctor?" asked one of the surgeons. "Are you okay?"

Arben inhaled deeply. This was his moment. Either he banished the shadow… or it would consume him before the entire German team.

He closed his eyes for just a second and spoke inside himself:

"You are not in charge. I am. Not you. Not ever again."

When he opened them, there was no shadow. Only the bright surgical lights and the faces of colleagues watching expectantly.

He smiled beneath his mask.

"Let's continue," he said, with a calm he had never felt before.

Rebirth

His hands moved as if guided by a force that had slept

inside him for years. He placed the graft with extraordinary precision, sutured with brilliant movements, and checked the blood flow meticulously. The monitor beeped in rhythm with the life returning to the patient.One of the German surgeons whispered:

"Das ist unglaublich… it's brilliant."

In those moments, Arben was no longer a victim of childhood. He was no longer the boy crying in the forest. He was no longer the man terrified of abuser shadows. He was a man creating life. A spirit reborn. A heart entirely his own.

When the operation ended, the clinic director extended his hand.

"This is one of the cleanest operations we've ever seen. Bravo. You are not just a surgeon… you are a divine force."

Arben paused. He closed his eyes. No dormitory scenes, but this time without violence. No small self, but this time without fear.

He saw himself as a man—and as a new version of himself.

"I'm ready," he whispered, this time with a voice steady, with a calm he had never known.

His hands moved as if guided by a force long dormant within him. Each motion was precise, confident, like someone returning life to the patient's body.Arben paused again. Closed his eyes. No dormitory, no violence, no fear. He saw himself as a man—a new version of himself."I am ready for my new life."And this time, he believed it with all his soul.

ELIRA DOSTI

Interview on RTSH that changed everythin Arben and Elira: Love Found Where They Least Expected It

Arben and Elira discovered love where they weren't looking—in the quiet of a glance. Between them, love wasn't a promise but a recognition—the recognition of two souls realizing that sometimes salvation comes simply from being seen with the heart.

Dr. Arben had become a familiar name on international television. His complex operations in Germany had elevated him to an icon on the global stage. Tall, broad-shouldered, with black night-like eyes and dark hair falling lightly across his forehead, he always wore a black suit—a symbol of discipline and seriousness.

Behind him lay a painful childhood: cold dormitories, beatings from a violent father, and a life forged in silence. Now he was strong, wealthy, and sought-after—and he had achieved it all on his own. An anti-communist to the core, a participant in the December movements, he never forgot why he had risen.

"Opposing a regime is hard to vanish, but easy to topple. We toppled it—but we gained nothing," he would say every day.

He knew humans were naturally slaves, often lowly, yet sometimes good when they have nothing in hand. The cruelest creature on earth, in the struggle for existence, was human… especially the red one.

Arrival at RTSH

From the outside, the RTSH building seemed silent, but inside it buzzed like a small city: voices, cables, cameras, bright lights. The air carried the aroma of seasonal coffee and the metal of old equipment.
At the main entrance, Arben was greeted by the RTSH director, two editors-in-chief, a news anchor, and the woman who would interview him: Elira Dosti.
Elira was tall, elegant, with deep blue eyes glowing under the studio lights. Blonde hair flowed softly over her shoulders. She wore a classic black dress and held a folder with the interview questions.
With degrees in both Journalism and Law, she spoke with cool, professional calm. When Arben saw her, something unexpected hit him—a light flutter in his chest, as if his heart had forgotten its rhythm.
Director: "Dr. Kodra, welcome! It's an honor to have you in our studio."
Arben: "Thank you. The honor is mine. I've received many invitations… but I thought home is here."
Elira (smiling lightly): "We're lucky. I'm Elira Dosti, and I'll be conducting today's interview."
Arben (slightly awed by her presence): "Elira… pleasure. I've followed your work. You ask smart, precise questions."
Elira: "I'll try not to disappoint you today. Please, follow me into the studio."

As he walked behind her, he noticed the soft scent of

her perfume—completely different from anything in the operating room. A strange shiver, a mix of awe and sudden attraction, ran through him. His heart skipped lightly, as if waking from a long sleep, and his thoughts scattered. Instinctively, he followed her, drawn by a force needing no explanation—just closeness.

In the Studio

The lights came on. Cameramen counted down. Elira lifted her gaze, meeting his eyes directly.

The central RTSH news studio was modern and elegant, designed to convey authority and trust. White LED lights on the high ceiling bathed the room in a pure, almost surgical glow, highlighting every detail with crystal clarity. Reflections danced lightly on glass and metal surfaces, giving the studio a slightly futuristic look.

At the center was the iconic news desk, built of thick tempered glass and matte black steel. Its semicircular design was simple yet commanding. Behind it, a giant LED screen changed colors and graphics before each broadcast: sometimes world maps, sometimes deep blue gradients symbolizing seriousness and calm.

Professional cameras on heavy tripods stood ready, like silent metal eyes. Thick black cables ran across the glossy black floor to the control room beyond a large transparent glass panel. Inside, monitors illuminated the faces of directors and technicians. Every monitor showed a different angle of the studio, the on-screen graphics, and broadcast

signals. Soft blue light from the monitors created a calm, professional atmosphere.

On the presenters' desk were two small microphones—barely visible to viewers but powerful enough to capture every nuance of sound. Ergonomic black chairs completed the minimalist setup, keeping visual focus on the interview.

In a corner was the interview space: two white designer chairs, a low dark-wood table, soft lights, and an RTSH-branded acoustic panel backdrop. The warm lighting created intimacy, the perfect environment for Dr. Arben Kodra's interview.

High above, projectors, boom mics, and spotlights hung from the ceiling, giving the studio the feel of a modern theater stage.Amid all this technology, Elira's calm, authoritative voice echoed softly as she rehearsed:"Dear viewers…"

She looked into camera one. The director nodded approval.

Elira: "Tonight, we have the honor and privilege to bring you the story of a remarkable Albanian success on the European stage. One of the continent's top doctors, a surgeon who has earned the respect of prestigious hospitals and the admiration of thousands of patients. His fame has crossed Albania's borders—operations performed in Germany have placed him among the most respected names in modern medicine. He is Albanian. His name is Arben Kodra. And he is here with us tonight."Arben took it all in. The studio smelled of fresh air, electronics, and the professional perfume of moving staff with headsets and folders in hand. The space felt like a temple of information,

where every movement was measured, every word chosen, and every detail served the truth.
For the first time, Arben Kodra entered this temple—tall, in his black suit, dark eyes calm, a man who had seen both hell and miracles.
Elira Dosti (calm, authoritative): "Dear viewers, tonight we are honored to share the story of one of Albania's most successful doctors in the international arena…" "He is one of the best doctors on the continent—a surgeon who has earned the respect of the most prestigious hospitals and the admiration of thousands of patients. His fame has crossed Albania's borders; his operations in Germany have placed him among
the most esteemed names in modern medicine. He is Albanian… his name is Arben Kodra, and he is here with us tonight." Elira: "Welcome, Dr. Kodra."
The camera slowly pans from Elira to Arben, who smiles slightly and offers his hand.
Elira: "Are we ready, Doctor?"
Arben: "More ready than ever."
Elira: "You've been called 'the unbeatable surgeon.' How does it feel to hear that nickname?"
Arben: "I don't believe in miracles. I believe in hard work, discipline, and in the patient who fights alongside me."
Elira: "Has fame changed you? We often see you in international media."
Dr. Arben: "Fame hasn't changed me. My difficult childhood did… it taught me not to lose the ground beneath my feet."
Elira: "In Germany, you've performed some of the most

complex surgeries in Europe. Which was the hardest day?"
Arben (thoughtfully): "The day a child arrived with no hope… and I had to do the impossible to keep him alive."
Elira: "You are outspoken against communism. How has your political life influenced your professional path?"Dr. Arben: "Every single day. Communism left me sleepless, homeless, without a future. That made me fight twice as hard."Elira studies him silently for a few seconds, clearly impressed. The camera focuses on Arben. He adjusts his black collar calmly, his gaze deep, giving the impression of someone who has seen much but speaks little. Elira smiles professionally.

Elira: "Dr. Kodra, thank you for being with us tonight. Our viewers have followed your work for years, but your fame accelerated after your surgeries in Germany. I want to start with a simple question… though it may not feel simple to you: How does it feel as an Albanian doctor to be recognized among the best in Europe?"
Arben (calmly, without pride, slightly lowering his head): "I feel normal… like the boy from yesterday in the Tirana dormitories, fighting to survive. Titles don't change me. But I must say, it's an honor to represent your country through work, not words."
Elira (softer tone): "You've had a difficult life. Few know that your childhood was full of physical and psychological trauma. Do you think it shaped you as a person… or as a doctor?"
Arben (looking briefly down, then into the camera): "It shaped me as a person. As a doctor, failure shaped me…

because a doctor who fears failure becomes better with every passing day. Childhood trauma… it gave me the strength not to give up. Not to let people die without a fight."
The camera returns to Elira, who studies him a moment longer than necessary.
Elira: "Do you think pain has made you better at understanding the pain of others?"
Arben (smiling lightly, not hiding the bitterness): "Without a doubt. A person who has known darkness… knows light better. I'm not supernatural, Ms. Dosti… I just don't forget."
Elira (impressed): "That's a powerful answer."
She smiles lightly and continues:
Elira: "Let's talk about your surgeries in Germany. You are often called 'the Albanian surgeon breaking boundaries.' What was the most challenging professional moment there?"
Arben: "A six-year-old child… with a tumor very close to a brain nerve. They told me, 'It's impossible.' I sat down, drank a glass of water, and said: 'Nothing is impossible; it just hasn't been tried.' The operation lasted eleven hours. Today, that boy plays soccer."
Behind the cameras, a murmur of admiration rises.
Elira (smiling, eyes shining): "That's news every viewer will remember. Dr. Kodra, a more personal question… You often become a topic in the media not only as a doctor but as a public figure. You avoid the public life, events, and social appearances… why?"

Arben (looking directly at Elira, warmly for the first time):

"Because I want peace. I don't trust a world that revolves around appearances. I want to be sincere… I'm here tonight only because you invited me."
Elira looks briefly surprised, clearly not expecting that answer. A faint smile escapes her.
Elira: "I deeply appreciate that. And now, a question many viewers have asked: Does such success come at a price? Is it paid in loneliness?"
Arben (pauses for two seconds, takes a deep breath): "Yes. Success is costly. Very costly. Everyone wants something from you… but very few want to understand you."
Elira looks at him with natural, not staged, compassion.
Elira: "And do you miss someone… on this journey?"
Arben (avoiding the camera, looking only at her): "Maybe yes. Maybe no. I need time to understand… time I've never had until now."
Elira: "Wise words. Dr. Kodra, thank you for your honesty and presence tonight. It's been an honor to have you in the studio."
Dr. Arben: "The honor is mine. Thank you."
When the interview ends, the studio fills with warm energy. Cameramen, journalists, assistants… everyone comes forward to greet Dr. Arben. Some shake his hand respectfully, others smile with genuine admiration. Arben responds to each with his characteristic kindness: a calm smile, a warm word, a firm handshake. It is clear he values people, regardless of position or role.
Elira stands slightly behind, observing him with quiet reflection. She is no longer just the journalist interviewing

a public figure; she is a woman witnessing a man who maintains kindness amidst everyone around him.
When Arben finishes greeting everyone, he approaches Elira with a gentle smile, his voice still slightly tired from speaking. Open Admiration. The camera focuses on Arben. He adjusts his black collar, calm, with that deep gaze that makes you feel he has seen much, yet speaks little. Elira smiles professionally.
Elira: Dr. Kodra, thank you for being with us tonight. Our viewers have followed your work for years, but your fame has particularly soared after your surgeries in Germany.
I want to start with a simple question… though it may not feel simple to you:
How does it feel, as an Albanian doctor, to be considered among the best in Europe?
Arben (calm, without pride): He lowers his head slightly and, with a model-like gaze, says, "I feel normal… like that boy from yesterday, from the dormitories of Tirana, fighting to survive. Titles don't change me.
But I will say this: it's an honor to represent your country with work, not words."Elira (softer tone): You have had a difficult life. Few know that your childhood was filled with physical and psychological trauma.
Do you think this shaped you as a person? Or as a doctor?
Arben (looking slightly down, then at the camera): I think it shaped me as a person.
As a doctor, it was failure that shaped me… Because a doctor who fears failure becomes better than any day that passes. Childhood traumas… They gave me the strength not to give up. Not to let people die without a fight.

The camera returns to Elira. She studies him a moment longer than necessary
Elira: Do you think pain has made you more capable of understanding others' pain?Arben (slight smile, not hiding the bitterness): Without a doubt. One who has known darkness… knows the light better.
I'm not supernatural, Mrs. Dosti…
I just don't forget…Elira (impressed): A very strong answer…

She accompanies it with a soft smile and continues:
Let's talk a bit about your surgeries in Germany. You have often been called "the Albanian surgeon breaking boundaries."
What was the most difficult professional moment you experienced there?Arben: A six-year-old boy… with a tumor very close to the brain nerve. They told me, "It's impossible."
I sat down, drank a glass of water, and said: "Nothing is impossible; it's just untested."
The operation lasted eleven hours. And today, that boy plays soccer.
The audience murmurs in admiration behind the cameras.
Elira (smiling, her eyes shining): That's news every viewer will remember.
Dr. Kodra, a slightly more personal question…
You have often been in the media not just as a doctor, but as a public figure.
You avoid public life, events, social appearances… Why?

Arben (looking at Elira, for the first time warmly): Because I want peace. I don't trust a world that spins around facades. I want to be sincere… Today I am here only because you invited me.

Elira is momentarily taken aback, clearly not expecting that. A slight smile betrays her surprise.
Elira: I really appreciate that.
And now, a question many viewers have sent: Is there a price for such success? Does it come with loneliness?
Arben (pauses two seconds, deep breath): Yes. Success is expensive. Very expensive. Everyone wants something from you… But very few want to understand you.
Elira looks at him with natural, not televised, compassion.
Elira: And do you miss someone… on this journey?
Arben (avoiding the camera, looking only at her): Maybe. Maybe not. I need time to understand… Time I've never had until now.
Elira: Heartfelt words. Dr. Kodra, thank you for your sincerity and for being with us tonight. It was an honor to have you in the studio.

Arben: The honor was mine. Thank you.

When the interview ended, the studio filled with a warm energy. Cameramen, journalists, assistants… all approached Arben to greet him. Some shook his hand with respect, others smiled with genuine admiration. Arben responded to each with the kindness that defined him: a

calm smile, a warm word, a firm handshake. It was clear he valued people, regardless of position or role.

Elira stayed a few steps back, observing with an inner calm. She was no longer the journalist interviewing a public figure; she was simply a woman facing a man who knew how to preserve kindness even in the midst of everyone.
When Arben finished greeting, he approached Elira with a soft smile, his voice still slightly tired from speaking.
Arben: — Elira… Could I have your phone number?
She raised an eyebrow, slightly surprised by the sincerity of the request, but not uncomfortable.Elira: — Of course, doctor.
She quickly typed her number into his phone. He looked at it for a moment, as if wanting to say more, then added:

Arben: — If you're free… I'd be happy to have coffee. Nearby, at the RTSH café.
There was no hesitation, no doubt on her part.
Elira: — I'd be happy to.
It was a simple, pure moment — a statement that needed no embellishment. Both felt a lightness that immediately connected them.
Just a minute later, after closing the equipment and saying goodbye to the staff, Arben and Elira stepped out of the RTSH building together. The city was wet, the smell of rain filling the air, while the evening lights created a quiet space for two people just beginning something new.
Their love did not start with noise; it arrived like the light

of a calm morning — slowly, but so purely, teaching their hearts that happiness requires little: just someone who sees you, listens, and stays without changing you.
And within minutes, they walked toward the small café across from the television station, where evening light fell gently and voices blended with soft background music. They drank coffee without noticing the time, talking about work, life, and the small things that make days easier. Elira felt an unfamiliar warmth, a sense of security she had long missed.
Finally, the careful and sincere doctor stood.
— "Tomorrow I have an important hospital visit," he said. "If I invite you, you can see the house where I will live. If you want… I could show it to you one day."
She smile"I would like that."
That was all it took for a door to open between them—a new love. Fragile, pure, and filled with beautiful anticipation.
Time passed quickly, like water flowing in a river, unnoticed and silent. Evening arrived. They didn't feel the hours slip by. The clock had moved late. The doctor glanced at it and rose with a hint of regret.

Elira lifted her eyes, and that gentle smile left a sweet warmth in his chest.
— "I wish we could stay longer."
They walked together to the café's door. Before parting, Arben paused for a moment, as if searching for the right words.
— "I don't know why… but I feel like this isn't just a coffee…"

Elira looked straight at him, her voice low and quiet:—"Neither do I."

Then he slowly walked into the night. Elira remained on the sidewalk for a few seconds, her heart racing as if trying to hold onto that moment forever.

That night was the beginning of something. Not loud. Not declared. But real. Fragile. Beautiful. A love that had just opened its eyes."Arben and Elira's love lit up like a pure light, but it could not withstand the shadows that always linger close to the human heart: fear, doubt, and silent observation. For love does not die from lack of feeling, but from the moment someone no longer feels free within it."

A New Life Together

After that philosophical statement that split silence from fear, Arben and Elira began seeing each other more often. Every meeting was like a new day of discovery: He explored her careful gaze; she discovered his determined heart. Their smiles grew more frequent, their conversations deeper. Every small moment between them was a step toward truly knowing each other.

One evening, after a long talk under the warm glow of twilight, they decided on something both had felt for a long time: This was real love, and they wanted to live together. Marriage wasn't the goal yet—they didn't know each other fully and wanted time to build their relationship, to understand each other's habits, dreams, and vulnerabilities. Their decision was simple and clear: Elira would stay at Arben's home. There, a new family life would begin—a life Arben had always dreamed of, but often lacked. Every

morning, they found each other nearby, sharing coffee, conversations, and those sweet silences that need no words. Every glance, every step made the house a place where safety and love were all that mattered.

Meanwhile, Arben continued his surgeries abroad, working with European clinics. His earnings—all declared and secure—arrived in his bank account. A million dollars, earned through tireless work, intelligence, and dedication. Yet no sum of money could equal the happiness he felt when Elira smiled beside him.

Their love grew stronger each day. Every morning, every midnight, every small conversation, every simple smile drew them closer. They shared more than time—they shared life, trust, dreams, and fears. Each day brought new discoveries about one another, and every shared moment reinforced the belief that together, they could build a new world—a world where everything else seemed distant and insignificant.

After dinner, they often sat by the large window in Arben's home, watching the city fade beneath the night lights. There, between darkness and light, their love shone brighter than anything else. They understood that no matter the challenges ahead, they had each other—and that mattered more than any wealth, success, or passing day.In the quiet of night, sometimes they smiled without words. A touch of the hand, a long look, and they both knew: Their love was no longer just a feeling—it was a daily choice, a commitment, and a hope that survived even as the world around them changed.

And so, as days passed, Arben and Elira began building a life together—filled with love, shared challenges, and dreams—where each day became a new chapter in their story.

Love and Shared Dreams

Arben and Elira's love grew stronger every day, both powerful and calm. Every shared moment was a reflection of the dream they had for a life together. They understood that love was not just a feeling that came and went, but a choice, a promise renewed daily.

When Elira stood beside him in the morning, making coffee, and Arben prepared his work documents, a peaceful feeling filled the home. Every glance, every small smile, every touch of the hand expressed a quiet love that spoke louder than words.

Often they sat in silence, looking at each other and feeling one another, and that silence was more honest than any words ever spoken. In these quiet moments, they spoke of dreams: a simple life filled with warmth and devotion, a home that was more than walls and furniture—a place where hearts grew together.

Their love had passed the test of time: it began with a first glance, strengthened through continuous visits, and now was flourishing like a strong tree with roots in rich soil.

Arben looked at Elira, thinking that anything in the world could fade, except this love. Any challenge, any obstacle outside the home, was insignificant compared to the shared warmth they had. He understood that it wasn't

wealth, work, or success that made life meaningful—it was the ability to share life with someone who sees you, understands you, and loves you unconditionally.Elira felt the same. Arben's love gave her a sense of safety and calm she had never known. Every day, she felt closer to his heart, and every touch spoke louder than words. She understood that love wasn't just something to express, but something to feel, to live, in every shared moment.

In the quiet of the evening, as the city slept and streetlights shimmered in the dark, they sat by the window, watching the stars—far away, yet close to their hearts. Arben held her hand and said softly:

— "Every day with you is a dream I want to live forever."

Elira smiled and replied:

— "And every step you take shows me that love isn't just words—it's life, lived together."

In those moments, there was no fear, no doubt, no obstacle. There was only their love—felt and expressed in every breath, every look, every touch. d softly. A love that united them, empowered them, and gave them the courage to dream together, without fear of the future.

They knew this love was more than an ordinary story: it was a new world, a silent promise, and a lasting expression of the spirit that says when two people truly love each other, every day makes life beautiful—even when the world around them seems dark.

Even though they now lived together in Arben's home, their days were not always free of absence. Arben often had to travel abroad for his surgeries. But no distance could dim

their love; if anything, it grew stronger, deepening through postcards and messages written with care—each infused with heartfelt, enduring affection.

Every postcard that reached Elira was a window into Arben's world, a piece of his soul speaking without words: "My Elira, as I walked the streets today, I thought of your smile. Every light seems softer when I think of you."

She kept them all carefully in a small box by her bedside. Each card was a promise that could not be broken, a simple, beautiful reminder that kept him close to her heart. For Elira, these letters were more than words—they were feelings, dreams, and promises that stretched beyond time.

Arben, too, wrote to Elira:

"My love, today I passed a clinic that reminded me of our early days. I wished you were here beside me. Every step away from you teaches me to value every moment we share."

His postcards were a breath, a way of saying, "Even when I am not near you, I am always with you."

On the days when his absence felt longest, Elira often replied with simple, sincere words:

"Arben, every day I realize more that our love is not just a feeling. It is a choice and a commitment. I wait for you—I wait for every moment you return—because every postcard from you reminds me that you are with me."

These postcards became a silent dialogue, where the written word spoke louder than any long conversation. They were tiny signs of love, impervious to time or distance.

Each card brought a smile to her face, warmth to her heart,

and a quiet promise: their love was blooming stronger, nourished by absence, expanding with every written line.
One day, while reading another postcard from Arben, Elira paused at a line that touched her deeply:"Elira, wherever I go, I see the world as more beautiful because I know you are waiting for me at home. Every day spent apart teaches me to love you more."
She smiled and touched the card, feeling that rare moment when words and emotion align perfectly. This was a kind of love that does not need spectacle; it is a love that survives distance and grows stronger for it.For Arben and Elira, postcards were not just letters. They were pillars of their love, proof of commitment, and expressions of feelings that could not always be spoken aloud. And as time went on, they realized true love is not just being near someone—it is keeping each other alive in mind and heart, even when distance tries to shrink it.
Shared Glances and Quiet Nights
The room was calm, the dim night light spilling through the large window. A gentle breeze carried scents from outside, but inside, Arben's home was warm and peaceful. They stood close, looking into each other's eyes, without words—because some feelings need no words; a glance alone is enough.
Elira smiled softly, feeling her heart beat a little faster. They wore pajamas but felt neither cold nor heat.
"I like watching you like this… just here, beside me," Arben whispered, moving closer, taking her hand in his.
"I feel it too," she replied, her voice low. "There's something

about the way you look at me that makes everything else feel unimportant."
They drew near slowly, like two people who had known each other for years yet were still discovering one another. A small smile, a touch of the hand, a look that spoke more than any sentence.

— "You make everything feel easier," Elira murmured, resting her head on his chest.
— "Because you are the reason every day feels more beautiful," Arben responded warmly.
They lay together on the large bed, surrendering to a sacred silence. Elira's body, freed from every barrier, rested naturally against his. Her skin glowed softly, warmly, like morning light slipping quietly into a closed room. Every curve, every line of her body spoke quietly, wordlessly, of trust and closeness.
He felt her warmth draw near, her breath matching his, heartbeats finding the same rhythm. The fears and tensions of the day melted away under the comfort of each other. One hand over the other, a gentle touch that lingered longer than it should, as if time itself had forgotten to move forward.
Elira leaned closer, surrendering to him with deep softness. Between them, a warm, secret space emerged, where she was received as something precious—without fear, without resistance. He felt himself entering the core of her being, where beauty is not seen but felt, where every breath grows deeper and every touch gains meaning.

She had a rare softness at her core, a warm, fragile space that welcomed him naturally, calmly. Her beauty was restrained, small, and perfect in its own way, needing no name, because it was simply felt. Their union happened there, in that delicate privacy, where every movement was measured, every breath carried trust.

She had full, strong, rounded breasts, rising with pride and gentleness simultaneously. Her long, straight legs moved elegantly, giving her body a rare harmony. Her posture was natural, calm, and in that moment she seemed like a star illuminating the night—not with noise, but with her silent, mesmerizing presence.

Their movements were quiet, restrained, as if protecting a secret that should not be spoken aloud. She shivered slightly, not from uncontrolled desire, but from a sense of completeness. In that silent closeness, he understood that her greatest beauty was precisely this natural, gentle way she opened herself and allowed him in.

The room filled with the calm only true love can bring. Elira looked at Arben and whispered:

— "I've dreamed of nights like this… but I never imagined I'd feel so at peace."

Arben smiled and replied:— "Dreams come true when someone waits for you with heart and eyes."

They stayed close, feeling every heartbeat, every touch, every breath. It was a night where time seemed to stand still; the outside world ceased to exist. Only they, only their love, and the safety of each other mattered. In the

darkness of the night, with the soft moonlight falling on their faces, Arbeni and Elira felt that everything they had been searching for until now was finally there: beside each other, in the quiet warmth of a night they didn't want to end.

It was a night of true love, where every glance, every touch, every smile spoke more than any words could. A night that would stay in their hearts forever.

The intimacy of two hearts

The night that followed their first meaningful looks and heartfelt words, Arbeni and Elira remained entwined in bed. The pale moonlight draped over their bodies, blending with the shadows of the room, creating a calm, intimate atmosphere.

They didn't need words. A smile, a gaze, a gentle touch of the hand was enough to convey every hidden feeling between them. Arbeni cupped Elira's face in his hands, looking into her eyes, and she returned a deep gaze that reflected all her fears, dreams, and hopes."I love it when you're this close," Elira said, resting against his chest.

"I feel the same way. You make everything else feel unimportant," Arbeni replied, holding her even closer.

It was simple intimacy, the kind that needs no spectacle: feeling accepted, understood, and loved. Every touch, every hug, every smile whispered, "You are mine, and I am yours." They stayed close, sharing quiet moments where only heartbeats and breaths connected them. It was a kind of love that couldn't be put into words—it had to be felt.

A hand held, a warm embrace, a smile that spoke louder

than any words.“I’ve dreamed of a life where we’re always together,” Elira said, placing his hand over her heart.
“And now we’re living that dream,” Arbeni said, holding her close, his eyes shining.
They lay together in silence, feeling true intimacy—not just physical, but emotional. It was a connection that belonged only to them, a world no outside obstacle could penetrate. Every small hug, every quiet smile, every gaze drew them closer.

It wasn’t just being physically near. It was feeling safe, loved, and understood; sharing dreams, fears, and hopes; knowing that their hearts beat in the same rhythm.
Even as the moon completed its arc and the night deepened, they stayed embraced, feeling that their love was eternal and unconditional. A love that needed no excess words, because every glance, every hug, every smile spoke louder than any poem or card could.
Distance and challenges
The days dragged when Arbeni had to travel abroad for his operations in Europe. Every departure left a deep void in Elira, but they had learned a little secret: love doesn’t fade with absence; it blooms through memories, postcards, and messages shared between them.
Before leaving, he held Elira close and whispered:
“I’ll be back soon… and every day away from you teaches me how much I want to be near you.”
“I’ll be here every day, waiting for you,” she replied, feeling a warmth fill her heart.During his absence, Elira

received short postcards and messages from Arbeni, each one expressing what he couldn't say aloud. On one card, he wrote:

"My Elira, every place I go, every street and every light reminds me of you. Every day apart teaches me to love you more, and every night I dream of the moment I'll be with you again."

His postcards became a ritual. They weren't just letters—they were bridges connecting two hearts, keeping their feelings alive even when distance tried to erase them. Elira often sat by the window, reading his words and holding them close to her heart. Every written word, every expression of love filled her with calm, yet a deep longing. One night, watching the moon rise above the city, she wrote him a card:

"Arbeni, even though you are far away, I feel you close with every breath. Every feeling reminds me of you, and every thought brings me to your smile."When Arbeni received it, he smiled, touched. He understood that their love was not simple; it could not be broken by distance or challenges. It was a powerful love, flourishing through devotion, expressed feelings, and the emotional intimacy they had built together.

When he returned a few days later, the warmth of the reunion and the closeness they shared in that first moment made him realize that no distance could undo what they had built. Every hug, every gaze, every smile after his return was stronger, more sincere, and deeper than any written word or card. They now knew a simple and beautiful truth:

love is not measured by distance, but by the intensity of feeling and the ability to share every moment of the heart with one another.

Return and shared dreams

When Arbeni came back, his home immediately filled with warmth and life. Elira greeted him with a wide smile and eyes glowing with happiness. Every absence had brought longing, but his return made them both feel as if the day had a fresh beginning.

“I missed every moment with you,” Arbeni said, holding her close.

“I felt the same. Every moment apart taught me to love you more,” she replied, taking his hand and looking into his eyes.

They sat by the window, feeling the soft breeze drifting through the city at night. The distant lights lit the quiet streets, and the faint hum of the city reached them like a gentle song. It was a moment frozen in time, where every breath and every whisper seemed to speak of unknown things, possible futures, and dreams waiting to awaken.

They began to talk about the future—not just a simple dream, but a vision that belonged only to them, a blend of their deepest desires and hope for what was to come.“I want this house to one day be more than just a shelter,” Arbeni said, looking out over the city’s lit streets. “I want it to be a place whereevery day’s chaos is left behind, and every heart can find the peace it seeks.”

Elira smiled, deeply moved by his words. Her voice became soft, almost a whisper that blended with the harmony of the night:

"A place where every memory of yours and mine comes together. Where…" Every joyful moment and every wound from the past found its place. A home that wasn't just walls and a roof, but a shelter for their souls.

They leaned into each other, feeling the warmth that came from simply being together. Even the silence of the night bore witness to a promise that could only be sown between their hearts. They knew their love had endured trials: distance, the demands of Arbeni's work, and the uncertainty of unknown days. Yet every obstacle had only made them appreciate each other more. Every glance, every smile, and every hug after his return was a moment they would never forget.

As the night deepened, they lay together in bed, side by side. Hand in hand, heart to heart, they shared the sweet silence of intimacy. Words were unnecessary; a look, a smile, a small touch was enough. Every feeling between them spoke of a love blossoming stronger than ever.

"I think now we can dream without fear," Elira said, resting against his chest.

"Yes, every dream seems possible when you're near me," Arbeni replied, holding her close.

The days after Arbeni's return felt peaceful, but the calm was deceptive. His work overseas demanded his full attention and often required him to be away for days or even weeks. Though Elira felt secure by his side, she understood that each departure carried risks and anxiety.

One evening, while sitting by the window, Elira whispered:

"Every time you leave, I feel an emptiness… even though I know you will always come back."
"I know, and it pains me to leave you. But every moment away makes me realize how much I need you," Arbeni answered, holding her hand in his.Distance and danger weren't just physical. Each of Arbeni's operations brought unknown challenges and unpredictable situations. But they never diminished their love; if anything, they strengthened it. Every message, postcard, and phone call became a way to maintain their connection, to share both worry and hope. One night, after a long and exhausting trip, Arbeni returned, and Elira embraced him tightly.
"I think this love is stronger than any challenge," she said, cupping his face in her hands."Yes, because we simply want each other. Every day, we choose to be together, even when everything around us feels uncertain," he replied, holding her warmly.
They spent the night sharing every concern, every dream, making their emotional intimacy a shield against the uncertainties of the world. Every eye-to-eye glance was a promise: "Even if the world tries to pull us apart, we will stay together."
In the days that followed, Arbeni's work challenges didn't cease. An unexpected trip to another European city demanded quick decisions and full attention. But before leaving, he told Elira:
"Every day away from you teaches me to treasure every moment we share. It makes our time together even more precious when I return."

"I'll wait, because moments shared by two hearts in love are stronger than any challenge," she replied with a calm smile and shining eyes.
Though the challenges were great, their intimacy and love endured and grew stronger. They realized that it wasn't just physical presence that held them together—it was the closeness of their hearts, the meaningful looks, the touches that conveyed safety, and the words that showed commitment. Every outside challenge made their bond stronger within.
In this way, Arbeni and Elira learned a simple but powerful truth: true love isn't measured by comfort or ease, but by the ability to stay close even when the world around you is unsettled.

They began talking about the days to come, the moments they would share, the trips, and the little adventures that would make them happy. Every word was a cornerstone of their shared dreams, and every small touch an expression of the security and love they held.
In the silence of the night, as the city lay beneath the dim lights, Arbeni and Elira realized their future wasn't predictable, but full of possibility and joy. Every day apart, every challenge overcome, every written postcard, every shared embrace had built the foundation for a strong, enduring love.They slept together, dreaming and feeling each other, understanding that love wasn't just the moment felt, but the choice made every day: to choose to love and to hold someone close, despite challenges and distance. This was love. And so, their night became the promise of a

shared future, where every dream, every smile, and every glance was a step toward the life they wanted to share forever.

Jealousy hidden behind love

The peaceful days after Arbeni's return didn't last long. As he continued to manage operations abroad, a new feeling began to emerge within him: a gentle, sensitive jealousy. It wasn't about distrust, but the fear of losing her, the unease that someone else might get close to Elira, or that she might experience joy without him.

One afternoon, while Elira spoke with a friend about a simple work event, Arbeni felt a small tension in his stomach.

"Who were you talking to?" he asked quietly, but with sensitivity.

Elira met his gaze and replied calmly,

"Just Arten, about organizing the event. Nothing to worry about."

He lowered his head, feeling a pang of guilt, staying silent for a moment that seemed endless. Yet despite her calm, Arbeni couldn't shake the feeling rising inside him. He knew there was no reason to be upset, but his heart felt differently.

"It feels like everything that happens without me makes me feel outside of you…" he admitted softly, holding her hands in his.

Elira understood immediately. His jealousy didn't come from lack of trust, but from the deep love he felt for her. She

smiled and gently pulled him closer, filling the moment with a quiet warmth that spoke louder than any words.
"Arben, you are everything to me. No friend, no event can ever change what I feel for you," she said, embracing him and holding his face in her hands.
In the quiet that followed, they held each other closely. Elira felt his tension and sought to turn it into intimacy. Their eyes met, and a strong sense of security spread between them.
"I want you to know that nothing could ever take me away from you," she said.
"I know… but my heart doesn't easily accept feeling like I could lose something so precious," Arbeni admitted, holding her hands tightly.
From that moment, jealousy didn't turn into conflict but became an opportunity to show even more love and devotion. They realized that sometimes the most complex emotions are born from the deepest commitment. truly, and that love isn't just about happiness, but also about how you face uncertainty and fear for each other.
That night, as the city sank into darkness, Arbeni and Elira lay together in bed. Hand in hand, eyes locked, they shared the warm silence of intimacy. Jealousy became a moment of reflection and closeness, making them realize that every true feeling—whether fear or jealousy—can strengthen love when shared with respect and honesty.
Jealousy and Sudden Decisions
A few days after that open-hearted moment, Arbeni began to feel more unsettled than before. It wasn't just ordinary

jealousy; it started affecting how he planned his days and his relationship with Elira. Every message, every call, every smile she shared with someone else felt like a small threat to him.

One morning, as Elira prepared for a routine work meeting, Arbeni suddenly appeared beside her:

"Where are you going this time?" he asked, with a tone stronger than usual.

"It's just a work meeting. Nothing to worry about," Elira replied, sensing the sudden tension between them.

"I know… but… I feel like I shouldn't let you go alone," Arbeni said, looking at her with a mix of concern and love.

Elira understood immediately: jealousy had crossed the line from feeling into controlling her freedom.

"Arben, love should never be a prison. I want to be with you, but I don't want to feel trapped," she said, gently squeezing his hand.

He felt her words, but the tightness in his chest didn't ease. In the following days, his decisions became more cautious and sometimes abrupt: he checked her messages more often, wanted to know every detail of her meetings, and occasionally canceled her plans for weak excuses.One evening, while sitting by the window, Elira looked at him seriously, her eyes reflecting a mixture of worry and love:

"Arben, I see that jealousy is pulling us apart. We can't go on like this. We need to trust each other, or this love will weaken," she said quietly but firmly.

Arbeni felt the weight of her words. He smiled faintly, though his eyes trembled with emotion.

"I know… and I don't want to lose a single moment without you," he admitted, holding her hand warmly and keeping her close.

They stayed there, silent, sensing a quiet agreement between them, a promise that simple words couldn't fully express.

"Then you have to let me be me, and you be yourself, without fear and without control," she added, looking into his eyes.

He understood that love could not survive within a framework of control. Jealousy could exist, but only as a reminder of how precious she was—not as a tool to impose limits or fear.

That night, lying side by side in bed, they shared the warm silence once again, now with a deeper sense of respect and trust. Arbeni gently touched her face and said,

"I'll try not to let jealousy take more of me than love does."

"And I'll be here every step, reminding you that our love is stronger than any uncertainty," she replied, holding him warmly.

They realized that love isn't just closeness and intimacy—it's the ability to face insecurity and fear within oneself, transforming them into care and respect for the other. And so, even though jealousy would sometimes return, they learned to use it as a lesson to strengthen their love and commitment.

The Risks and Trials of Love

Their peaceful days were interrupted when Arbeni received

an unexpected message that unsettled him: an unknown person connected to one of his overseas operations had shown sudden interest in Elira. The information was unclear, but enough to spark jealousy and concern within him.

"Who is this person? What does he want with you?" Arbeni asked one afternoon, looking at Elira with sharp eyes.

"Arben… it's nothing. A colleague wants to contact me about a project. It's nothing personal," she said, sensing his rising tension.

But Arbeni couldn't control the fear and jealousy filling him. He decided to act—not out of distrust, but from a desire to protect their love. He took measures: asking for more information about any potential contact and taking careful steps to ensure nothing threatened their safety or their relationship.

"I want to be sure that no one can hurt you, or the bond we share," he said one night, holding her close.

"I know… and I appreciate your care. But I need to trust that I can face any challenge without fear or unnecessary tension," she replied, meeting his eyes with calm determination.

Jealousy and concern thus became a test of their love: Arbeni learned to distinguish protective love from fear-driven control, while Elira showed strength and confidence in being herself and handling outside situations.

One night, after the city fell into darkness and the day's tension had eased, they lay together in bed. Arbeni held her and said,

"Even when jealousy clouds my mind, I understand that I cannot protect you by restricting you. Our love is stronger than any danger outside.""And I will always be here, understanding your fear and love," Elira replied, embracing him warmly.

In that moment, they felt that external challenges and uncertainty could test their love—but their intimacy, respect, and commitment made it unbreakable. Every trial, every danger, every tense moment became an opportunity to strengthen their bond, making their love more conscious and deeper than ever before.

The days that followed brought calm, yet a small trace of worry lingered in Arbeni's heart. Even though Elira reassured him daily with honest conversations, warm embraces, and her gentle presence, jealousy remained like a light shadow, following him quietly.

In their mornings together, when Elira stretched sleepily and rested her head against his chest, Arbeni felt a love that filled his soul—and a small fear that gripped him.

"Sometimes I'm afraid… of losing you," he whispered once, stroking her hair.

"You're not going to lose me so easily, Arben. I am… "Because I love you, not because you're holding me here by force," she said, her smile warm and gentle.

He kissed her softly, as if he wanted to believe her words completely. That night, Elira stayed closer to him than usual. She held him for a long time, kissed his neck, and soothed his hands, which trembled slightly from the tension of the past days.

"You feel insecure, and I feel that," she said softly.

"Don't push your fear away; let me hold it too," she added, her voice calm but filled with care and love.
Arbeni looked at her deeply, astonished by how she understood him without words. Part of him felt relief, while another part was shaken by the rising emotion inside. It was like a voice in the wilderness—heard from afar, yet impossible to hide, making him simultaneously weak and strong.Elira smiled lightly and placed her hand over his heart, as if to show that everything she felt was mutual.
"Dependence isn't a problem if it's sincere and pure. I want you to be mine, and I want to be yours," she said. Her words sank into him like a quiet but powerful promise.
He pulled her close, held her tightly, and kissed her long and deeply, with a passion fueled both by the fear of losing her and by the immense love he felt. Every touch, every breath seemed to speak louder than words ever could.
That night, their intimacy became deeper, more genuine, tied to their mutual need for each other's presence. Arbeni loved her with an intensity that sometimes scared him, but Elira calmed him with her gentle warmth.And their love, despite jealousy and uncertainty, grew stronger every day—not as an idealized, everlasting romance on paper, but as a real, human connection, filled with light and shadow, with the constant presence of emotions that could not be avoided.

love That Turned Into Surveillance
Dr. Arbeni was no longer the man they had once known. Fame had not done him any favors. Instead of elevating

him, it pushed him into a fog where old voices, forgotten fears, and past paranoias returned with strange force. The more he was mentioned on social media, in broadcasts, in news portals, the more he felt watched, analyzed, judged.

He had truly fallen for Elira, the beautiful journalist at his side, who lifted him up, valued him, and protected him. But what began as pure love—a force that healed his weary soul—gradually turned into a new wound.One night, as Elira slept beside him, Arbeni got out of bed and stood for several minutes watching her. His eyes were red, exhausted. "You're not lying to me, are you…?" he whispered, careful not to wake her.Elira didn't move. He drew in a deep breath, tugged at his pajamas, opened his eyes wider, and said to himself:
"No… no. Elira doesn't lie. Elira is mine. Only mine."
Then he spoke to himself. Then to the shadows on the wall. Then to people from the past…
"Where are you? Here I am! You ended up in the trash! Because you were trash!" he shouted, raising his voice so high that, for a moment, he thought Elira would wake. But she didn't.He liked that. She was asleep… calm. And as she slept, Arbeni felt a sick need to protect her… to watch over her. To keep her under surveillance everywhere. He scrutinized their bed with intense attention, wondering if the blankets had shifted, or if there were foreign traces in the room.

Jealousy
The next day was heavier.
"Where are you going today?" he asked as Elira dressed for work.
"I have an interview with the Minister of Culture… then a meeting with the editor… it's a long day."
"With the minister? About what? Who asked for you? Why you?"
Elira smiled gently.
"Arben, it's my work. I'm a journalist. They don't reach out to me as a woman, but as a professional."
He looked at her long, his eyes darkening.
"Your professionalism brings you dangerously close… too close to men I don't know. You don't understand… the world isn't innocent. People today only know how to exploit," he said.
"You're overreacting," she replied, picking up her bag. "Don't hold me accountable for every step; that's not love."
He grabbed her hand tightly.
"No, love is protection."
"Love is trust," she said.

He raised his voice.
"Trust begins where control ends!"She pulled back.
"This isn't normal, Arben. What you're saying… it doesn't heal; it harms."
He heard this as a blow. He didn't speak anymore. He simply sat on the couch, head in hands.
After Elira left, he started murmuring to himself:
"No… no, she won't leave me. She loves me. She's mine.

Mine…"
Dialogue with Himself
"Ah… my battery died," he lied.
Later that evening, when Elira hadn't returned yet, he left the light off and spoke to the shadows dancing on the walls.
"She's late…" he murmured, his low voice blending with the darkness.

Silence answered, heavy, like a wall closing in on every hope.
"Why is she late?" he continued, firmer this time.
"Is it with the minister?" an uninvited thought burst out.
"Or with someone else…" his voice grew harsher.
The tone of his inner voice changed like waves: sometimes gentle, sometimes harsh, forming a dialogue no one else could hear.
"Arben, pull yourself together!" he commanded himself.
But his body ignored the order.
"No!" he exploded, leaning against the wall. "I know what's happening! She's…!"
Then another voice, conjured by his mind, filled the space:
"She's betrayed you, Arben. You're famous… she envies you. She only wants your name. She'll use you."
"No. No. No." he whispered, trembling.
He recognized the signs clearly: paranoia stealing his peace, internal dialogues with himself, invented enemies, a sick attachment to imagination, unavoidable verbal aggression.
All of these appeared, yet he attributed them to "fatigue."
"Love and madness are brother and sister," he thought, trying to justify the conflicts within himself.

When Elira returned, he met her in the dark, fixated on what he refused to admit.
"Why are you late?" he asked in a low voice, almost a whisper.
"I had a meeting with the newsroom. I texted you a few times, but you didn't answer."He picked up his phone. It was off. A deep panic washed over him. The thought that she might have forgotten—or worse, not wanted to speak with him—crushed his heart. The silence of the room grew heavier, and the shadows on the walls seemed to question him as well: Can you control what doesn't exist, Arben?
"Please… don't do this to me. Don't doubt everything. You're suffocating me," she said softly, touching his cheek. But he pulled back.
"You're mine… and I'm yours, right? Don't make me think otherwise."
"Arben, love isn't ownership," she said firmly, looking him straight in the eyes.
He smiled dangerously.
"Well, that's how I learned it: love, jealousy, psychopathy."
"We've discussed this a thousand times: psychopathy is cured with cold water!" he replied, his bitter sarcasm quoting his old colleague.
Elira hesitated. This isn't a joke anymore…
He stepped closer, so near that she could feel his breath.
"I know what love is. Love is war. It's obsession. It's fire. And if I hold this fire, everyone else will burn. Whoever touches you… touches me."
She took a step back.

"Arben… I'm scared of what you're becoming."
He smiled lightly.
"I'm always me. Just… now I'm more honest than before."
Inner Dialogues
Dr. Arben began to tremble, lost in the darkness of his paranoid thoughts. Voices whispered in his ears:
She loves you… don't go crazy.
No, she's betraying you. You're foolish to trust her.
Then why are you so scared?
"I'm not scared! I'm sure! She has someone else!"
"Who? Who has her? Who touches her? Who sees? Who dares?"
"I'll find out. I'll find out everything."
At that moment, his eyes glinted with a cold fire.
He was slipping. And no one knew.
Slipping Into Darkness

Dr. Arben could no longer control himself. Doubt, once a quiet voice inside his mind, had now completely overtaken him. Thinking wasn't enough anymore; he needed to see, to check, to follow her every step. A kind of fire inside him was pushing him past the limits of reason.
He rose from his chair, opened the window, and leaned out to watch the empty street. A strange mix of excitement and fear shook his heart. Every step she took, every pause, every phone call she made—each was a secret message, a puzzle to decode.
And so he began to follow Elira himself. At first cautiously, staying in the shadows, hiding behind walls and parked

cars. Every movement she made was a story he tried to read, a code only he could understand. But with every passing minute, the fire of suspicion grew, making it harder to stop. In the darkness, the city seemed unclear, shadows merging with his sick thoughts, every distant light a signal only he could read. The sounds of the street, strangers' footsteps, passing cars—all intertwined with his paranoia: a world where reality and fantasy no longer knew boundaries.He wasn't doing this out of love, he told himself in a trembling inner voice. He was doing it to protect her, to keep her close. But deep down, he knew he was sliding into a darkness with no return. A dead-end road, filled with the shadows of the ghosts of his mind.

The Beginning of the Surveillance

One morning, when Elira left the house for work, he waited five minutes. Long enough not to be noticed. Long enough to feel "strategic"… and watchful.
Then he stepped out after her, hood up, sunglasses on. He walked a few steps behind, matching her pace, ducking whenever she turned her head.On Dibra Street, she stopped to buy a coffee. He hid behind a parked car, breathing unevenly, hands clenched tightly in his pockets. His heart pounded.Who are you talking to? he whispered, even though she was talking to no one.
Then he saw her laughing with the barista.
Why are you laughing? What did you say? Are you giving your heart to someone else? he murmured, eyes shaking.

In his imagination, every smile was proof. Every pause was a secret meeting. Every word was betrayal. The fog of treachery and female deceit consumed his mind and body. He no longer believed—because he had once read that beautiful women are property of others, and men are just formalities.

Maybe it's happening to me too, he thought, lost in the desert of his own dark reasoning.

The Spy Network

That evening, he called three people he knew from when they worked in government institutions. They were unemployed, abandoned, used to surveillance. They needed money—and Arben had plenty of work for them.He didn't waste time. He summoned them, bought red caps and two large bicycles, like for a scout patrol. In short: Keep your eyes and ears open. I'll employ you. No questions. Throw away your old clothes. Dress in black with the red hats. They opened their eyes but said nothing. He interrupted their hesitation and said:

"I want you to follow someone."

"Who?" they asked in unison.

"My wife," he replied coldly.

They exchanged looks.

"Doctor… we're not used to spying on people's families…"

Arben stood, face flushed red.

"You are low-level intelligence spies! You've surveilled families, everyone… You are liars. Do you want work or not?" he continued without waiting for an answer.

"She's not family. She's my danger! Whoever touches her,

I'll take their breath too! You'll be paid triple! Just follow her! Bring me every detail! EVERYTHING!"
They spoke no more. They didn't dare argue.
The next day, he hired two more people: a young man from a side street of the old electric market and a silent man who had once worked in secret investigations after '91.
"You'll report every friend, colleague, anyone who approaches her," he ordered. "I want names, numbers, places they meet, what they say. She must hide nothing from me."
Beginning of Spying on Elira's Friends
At the newsroom, Elira was seen talking several times with her colleague Arlind. Normal work behavior. But normalcy no longer existed for Arben.

One of his people, Shkëlqimi, sent him photos.
"Here they are, having coffee. Alone. Laughing."
Arben looked at the photos, hands shaking.
Who are you laughing with? Who do you think you are, Arlind?
He saved Arlind's number and called him secretly that evening.
"Hello? Who is this?" Arben didn't speak. He only listened to his own heavy breathing through the receiver.
"Hello? Who is this?" Arbeni hung up the phone.
"We'll see… we'll see who he really is," he said in a low voice, with a chilling calmness.

Observing Her Close Friends

Another day, Elira met with her close friend, Alba. They were discussing a report.

A man in a hoodie sat at a table a little further away. One of Arbeni's people. He was taking photos. Professional, careful, pretending not to notice—but he reported directly.

The report was short:
"With a friend. Talking about work. No men with them."

But Arbeni didn't believe it. He didn't trust information anymore, not evidence, not logic—what about that guy at the next table? The waiter who glanced twice? The passerby turning his head? You can't fool me! She's surrounded!

His man watching her said nothing. Better to remain silent.

The Inner Decay

One gloomy evening at home, Elira approached him softly, as if speaking to a lost child.
"Arben… what's wrong?" she asked gently. "You look exhausted. You haven't been sleeping. I saw your eyes open all night. Is work overwhelming you?"

He gave a short laugh, joyless, fading quickly into the air.
"Work…?" he repeated ironically. "Yes, work overwhelms me. The work of keeping our love… the one you're slowly

stealing from me."

Elira flinched.
"Me?" she asked in a trembling voice. "I'm stealing your love?"
"Yes," he said without hesitation. "With your smile you no longer give me. With your silence that excludes me. With the calls you hide. With every second you pass without responding. With every step you take without me, as if I didn't exist."

She lifted her eyes, horrified. In his face, she no longer saw the man she loved, but a tense, cold shadow.
"Arben… what you're saying is sick jealousy."

He shook his head slowly, as someone refusing to listen.
"No. This is love at its extreme. Love that cannot endure absence. Love that refuses separation." He paused, staring into her eyes. "Don't you like knowing someone's eyes are only on you? That they live only for you?"
That someone is me.

"No one should ever be like that, Arben…" she said, stepping back. "This isn't love. This is control."

He stepped closer. Just one step—but enough to fill the room with anxiety. His breath grew heavier, voice lower.
"Control is the only way not to lose what you want," he said. "And I don't intend to lose anything."

Elira felt something invisible closing around her, like a cage that made no sound as it shut.
"Yes, it's control. Control keeps love alive. Without control, love dies. I'm keeping it alive."

She stepped back. He saw it as proof. Better to remain silent than enter a pointless dialogue with her—her husband.

Inner Voices

That night, he spoke to himself again.
She's cheating on me.
No, Arben, maybe she isn't.
Yes, she is. You know it. You've always had strong instincts. You have to follow her. Yourself. You can't trust anyone else.
What about her friends? They laugh behind my back.
I'll watch them all. I'll uncover them one by one.
And when I find out who that man is…
Yes, what will you do, Arben?
I'll shut his mouth. Forever…

He laughed alone in the room, and the lamp flickered, as if the room itself feared him.
From Observation to Control
Following her wasn't enough anymore. Now he had to intervene. Control. Manipulate everything around Elira—her work, her time, the people she knew. He believed that

"love has a right over everything."

The Secret Messages

One night, Elira was asleep. Arbeni carefully took her phone from the nightstand, making sure not to wake her. His fingers moved quickly, driven by a paranoia he could no longer control.

He sent a message to her editor:

"I won't be able to attend the interview tomorrow. I'm sick. Let's reschedule for Monday.

Then he erased the traces. Another message to her colleague Arlind:

"I don't plan to go out for coffee with you anymore. Please don't write me."

He deleted that too. And a third message to her friend Alba:

"I need some space, to be alone. Don't call me for a few days."

Then he placed the phone back and returned to bed. Elira murmured something soft in her sleep. He watched her with a sick kind of tenderness.

"I'm protecting you… saving you from the people who would lead you astray," he whispered. Then he kissed her forehead gently and repeated:

"Love is a hood that protects you from the world. I am your hood."

The Disrupted Meeting

The next day, Elira was heading to an important interview with a major businessman. A big opportunity, a professional step forward.

Arbeni had learned the meeting's location. He arrived an hour early. He approached the receptionist.
"Hello. I'm from RTSH…" he said, mentioning Elira's name.
"Her meeting is canceled. There's a family emergency."The receptionist looked puzzled."Are you sure?"
He showed an old, expired ID card, but it looked official.
"Absolutely. I was informed directly. Please cancel everything."
When Elira arrived, the businessman was gone. The meeting had been erased.
She called her editor.
"Why didn't you tell me we postponed the meeting?"
"Me? I didn't tell you anything. You told me you were sick!"
Elira froze.
"No… no, I didn't say anything."
For a few seconds, silence. A shadow of doubt passed through her mind. But not about work. About herself.
Am I forgetting things? Am I tired?
From a distance, Arbeni watched her return with heavy steps. And he smiled.
So fragile… so easily broken… She is the beauty of earth and moon. She is the planet that exists only for me.
The Philosophy of Darkness

That evening, Elira told him everything.
"Something really strange happened today. It felt like things were being manipulated. Someone interfered…"
Arbeni lowered his head, tone soft, almost poetic.

"Sometimes the universe protects us from meetings we don't need. Have you thought of it that way?"
"It wasn't the universe, Arben. Someone is interfering in my life."
He took a glass of wine and said in a philosophical voice:
A person doesn't get lost on their path. They get lost when others open doors they shouldn't. Love is closing those doors.

Elira raised her eyebrows. — Love isn't a prison.
"— No," he said in a calm voice, "Love is guidance. If someone loves you, they guide you. If they don't guide you, they lose you. If they leave you free… they abandon you."

She looked at him, confused.
"These aren't healthy words…"

He smiled.
"They are honest words. The world is dangerous, Elira. Jealousy isn't a disease. Jealousy is the third eye of love. It sees what the heart cannot see."

"I don't want to be part of a love like that…" she said, her voice trembling.

He leaned close to her ear and whispered,
"Love, when it finds you, leaves no way out."

Everyone leaves, everyone returns. No one escapes their own heart.

Then he walked toward the kitchen, laughing quietly to himself.

A Frightening Message

A little later, Elira's phone vibrated. A message from an unknown number:
"Don't meet with Arlind anymore. He's not who you think he is."

She lifted her eyes from the screen and glanced at Arbeni, who was eating dinner. His face was calm, almost happy, as if nothing had happened.

She shivered.
"Arben… did you send me this message?"

He looked at her with a soft smile.
"What message?"

She held out the phone. Arbeni shrugged.
"Must be some crazy person following you on Instagram. You're beautiful, Elira. Many eyes follow you…"

She said nothing more. But her heart raced. Something inside her was breaking.

Locking the Network

Over the following days, messages kept appearing in her inbox:
"Your friends are laughing at you."
"Watch out for the one watching you at the newsroom."
"Don't trust your friend."
"Someone is touching your heart."

She began to suspect everyone. Meanwhile, Arbeni calmly told her:
"People must doubt, Elira. Doubt keeps you alive. True love makes your paranoid, and paranoia is the surest way to protect what you have."
"You're driving this love crazy," she said.
Arbeni smiled lightly, calm like the sea before a storm.
"No, I'm reviving it. I'm protecting it," he said. "Love requires struggle, defense, and attack. Love dies only when it settles. Strong love is always a little sick. Isn't that so?"
When he finished speaking, she understood for the first time: he was no longer the same man. And he had no intention of returning. She realized this man was slipping into darkness. His illness had become incurable. She had already completely consumed the good man he had once been.

Surveillance of Tirana
In the days when fame called itself a "blessing," Dr. Arbeni realized she was poison—sweet at first, bitter to the bone in the end.

The more the media mentioned her, the louder the old voices inside him became. Voices from the dark days of his childhood, when Tirana felt like a city of old soldiers, endless surveillance, and unending suspicion.
Now… everything was coming back. His love for Elira, the beautiful and ambitious journalist, had once been salvation. But quickly, too quickly, that salvation turned into ruin.
Love became jealousy. Jealousy became doubt. And doubt… turned into psychopathy.
Voices That Couldn't End in Silence
Arbeni paced the room in short steps, body slightly hunched, hands in pockets. He spoke slowly, repeating words no one could hear.
"He lied to me… yes, he lied… No, it can't be coincidence…"
"Did you see how he looked at me last night? Like someone who doesn't need me…"
He stopped. Turned his head to the left, as if someone spoke to him from the shadow of the wall.
You? And you? Now you speak, don't you? You ended up in the trash… because you were trash!

He raised his voice, and the shadow twisted on the wall—but no one was there. Only his mind, slowly breaking. He was communicating with shadows. His illness returned.

Secret Messages

At first, Elira didn't understand what was happening.

Messages began appearing on her phone without a sender:
"Don't go out today."
"Stay home. Someone is following you."
"It's not safe to meet the people you meet."
"They don't want you like I do."
At first, she thought it was just someone annoying. She became very frightened, thinking she was being followed. Then she noticed the rhythm. The time. The way every movement of hers was being described. Only one person could know. Arbeni.
Meeting Baç Dhelpra
From that day, Arbeni made a fatal decision: to meet the old ShIK chief, a man known only by a nickname: Baç Dhelpra. His office was next to the "Mother Teresa" Hospital—a room with old walls, the smell of burned files, and state-issued tobacco. When Arbeni entered, he was greeted ceremoniously.
Just as famous people are greeted, and at the same time, weak people.
"Doctor Arben! Finally, you've come. You've grown. All of Tirana knows you."The chief smiled with a calmness that sent chills to the bone.
"What brings you here?"
Arbeni didn't speak immediately. He paused, as if measuring the weight of his words. Then he whispered:
"She… is cheating on me. I need her followed. I want clean surveillance. I want… methods like before. The same, but more scientific."
Baç Dhelpra raised an eyebrow.

"Like before?"
"Yes. Exactly like before. Physical. Psychological. Total."
A slow, dry laugh filled the office.
"Then… we'll restore history. Some of our people are waiting…"
He immediately called the specialist in the field, who had emerged from the shadows of state security.
"Call him. Ymer Calamani—the monster who did all the dirty work for the chief."The door opened. A man around sixty limped in, white shirt, cold, dry smile. His name was feared in the old security corridors: Ymer Calamani. Former lecturer. Former surveillant. It was said he knew 47 ways to break people psychologically. None involved physical violence. They were worse.
He greeted with servility:
"Doctor… it's an honor. What do you need? Simple surveillance? Or… the old way?"
Baç Dhelpra intervened:
"Do your duty. Don't speak without my say."
He lowered his gaze. Dressed in a blue suit and polished black shoes.
"Raise your head," ordered the chief. "And listen. The doctor is our friend. No questions. Take note of everything he says. That's it. And act." Calamani smiled even more—and every time he smiled, it was as if his face donned the mask of a man, but beneath it, there was something else.
Black Uniforms and Red Heads
It was decided that surveillance would be carried out by a small team of eight—former agents, long in the shadows,

unemployed, scattered across the city, waiting only for a chance to return to their old trade.
Arbeni paid twenty thousand dollars on the spot.
The chief and Ymer smiled with restrained irony, almost pleased. It wasn't a small sum.
Arbeni broke the silence. His voice was low but sharp:
"— Listen here, men of vice…"
Then he gave the absurd order, with a calmness that unsettled everyone:
"— I want them dressed in black jackets. And… with red heads. Your wickedness is now part of the work."

He fixed his gaze on the Chief.Baç Dhelpra looked at him suspiciously.
"— Why red?"
"Because Tirana must be cleansed of evil. Shadows must wear the color of war. Do we have an understanding, yes?" Arbeni said.

Calamani bent slightly, as in an old ritual of approval.
"— As you command, Doctor. The shadows will wear the color you desire."
And so, the new team of Tirana was born:The Red Shadows
The Pursuit of EliraThey followed Elira everywhere.
In cafés.
To work meetings.
To interviews.
Even when she stepped out just for air.

Arbeni didn't trust his own people. Often, he would tail her himself—red-eyed, quick-stepping. He scribbled in an old notebook:
"— 18:03 – talking on the phone. With whom? Why smiling?"
"— 18:47 – meets her friend… or calls her a friend…"
"— 20:10 – someone greets her. My mind says: Is it him?"

Often his voice shifted from calm to explosive:
"Why do you do this? Why don't you tell me the truth? I only want to protect you…"
And again, he sent anonymous messages:
"Don't meet that man today. He is dangerous."
"He's using you. See? He didn't ask for sex. I only want you. That's all."
Then he pleaded with mercy and irony:
"Tell me the truth, or we'll both be lost."
All these messages he wrote on walls she passed by.
The Dark Philosophy of His Love
In his diary, he wrote a sentence that would terrify anyone who found it:
"Love is war. Jealousy is the uniform. Psychopathy is the weapon."
Below it, he wrote:
"Elira must be saved. Even if THE RED SHADOWS ENTER ELIRA'S LIFE."
The Days That Followed
Tirana became alive with invisible movement.
They appeared as shadows in the corner of her eye and vanished when she turned her head. Silent, fast, and

disciplined. Dressed in black jackets and red masks that glowed faintly in the night's dim light.
They were Dr. Arbeni's people. Former agents returned—the Red Shadows.The First Days of Surveillance
Elira didn't notice immediately.
On the first mornings, it just felt like someone was watching her from the sidewalk. When she left her home on Rruga e Dibres, a gray car would stop somewhere in the distance, engine running, interior lights dim—like eyes hidden behind curtains.
In a moving vehicle along the streets, one of the Red Shadows reported:
"— Target moving. 07:53. Heading toward the newsroom."
Another replied:
"— Stay behind. Do not approach. She must think life is continuing normally."

But her life would no longer continue normally. She was now the object of a sick, paranoid being.

Feeling the Cold
At the newsroom, Elira began noticing someone waiting at the entrance—not every day at the same time, but always in the same place. A tall man, dressed simply, so ordinary he became invisible. He gave the impression of a tax office worker, or some anonymous department—those people no one dares to question.
He opened the door with a trained, neutral smile.
"Good morning, Ms. Elira."

His voice carried neither friendship nor threat. It was purely official.
One morning, Elira turned to her colleague, Monda.
"— Do you know that man?"
Monda shrugged, unconcerned.
"— No. Just see him here often. Maybe some institutional check… That's how it is now. They always come unannounced."

Elira nodded but felt her stomach tighten. It wasn't ordinary fear—it was something older, deeper. The instinct of a journalist who senses danger before it takes form. She had learned to read pressure, imposed silence, eyes that see without being seen. And now, that instinct told her clearly: someone was following her. Not step by step—but thought by thought.

Arbeni's Secret Notes

Meanwhile, Arbeni became increasingly precise and dangerous. In his notebook, he recorded every detail:
"08:12 – Someone smiled at her. Who was her companion at the conference that day? Pressed? Why is it connected to Elira?"
"14:45 – Applied new lipstick. For whom?"
"18:22 – Ate with someone. Street camera didn't capture clearly."
On the pages, he also wrote self-addressed comments:
"I love you… and you lie to me… why? Why must I seek

answers from others, not from you?"
His voice bounced off the walls of the empty room:
"— God save me from love that betrays me."
He paused. Breath heavy. Then, in a quieter tone, as if confessing a forbidden secret:"— God save me from my own mind… that I cannot control."
Lights were off. Only his laptop screen illuminated his pale, tense face. Reports arrived daily, on precise, cold schedules, like morgue documents. The Red Shadows forgot nothing: entrances, exits, stops, silent conversations, fleeting glances, long silences. He read them with a sick intensity. Every sentence seemed like a sign. Every gap, a hidden clue. Even when a report said "nothing suspicious," he lingered longer. Because to him, nothingness was the most dangerous form of guilt.
A coffee left unfinished.
A missed call.
A five-minute delay.
In his mind, everything connected. Every detail built a narrative only he could see. And the more reports piled up, the more certain he became—not of the truth, but of suspicion.
The Red Shadows reported.
He judged.
And reality, little by little, began to lose its right to speak.
Elira's First Encounter with the Red Shadows
One evening, as Elira was leaving the newsroom, a red reflection caught her eye on the glass of the door. She froze. Her heart raced. It wasn't a car light—

It was a mask, a red face, vanishing the moment she turned."Wha—what… is happening to my eyes?" she whispered.
"Who… was that?"
That night, for the first time, she ran home. Terrified, trembling, still struggling to believe what was happening.
The Red Shadow reported:
"— Target disturbed. Did not linger. Made no contact with anyone. Mission continues."
The message went straight to Arbeni's phone.
Arbeni smiled.
"— Good. Good… she knows someone's watching. Maybe now she won't meet him… that… that—"
His voice faltered.
"— That traitor…"
Night Talk – Paranoia Becomes Philosophy
One night, he sat on the balcony of his house, lit a cigarette, and spoke in a voice only he could hear:
"— She loves me. Yes. With her heart. But love, when uncontrolled… is a disease."
He grabbed his notebook and wrote:
"Pure love has only two enemies: fear and imagination. I have both. That is why I suffer."
Then he added:
"When one doubts, one no longer loves. One watches."
And below:
"Jealousy is the greatest proof of love. But also its punishment."

It seemed a shadow whispered:
"— And you are punishing it, aren't you?"
Arbeni answered:
"— I'm protecting it…"
But the dark voice within him laughed:
"— Protecting it from whom? From her? Herself?"
When Surveillance Becomes Intervention
The Red Shadows were no longer satisfied with following. They began to infiltrate her life.
One became a waiter at the café where Elira drank her morning coffee.
Another was temporarily hired at the newsroom for "technical work."
A third sat in the seminar where she presented on media ethics—taking notes on every question she asked.
They reported every word she spoke to Arbeni. One day, they sent this report"Target said: 'I've never had any relationship with a politician or official. A journalist's freedom is their life.'"

Arbeni read it aloud, voice trembling:
"— A journalist's freedom… their life…"
Then his tone dropped low, terrifying:
"— Why must she stress it so strongly? Who asked her? Who engages her? Why must she protect herself… From whom?"
He was horrified, clawed at his face, almost crying.
And there, for the first time, he wrote the sentence that would push him toward madness:

"People only protect themselves when they are hiding something."

Arbeni Appears Where She Least Expects

One evening, at a media event, Elira was leaving the hotel when she suddenly heard:

"— Elira."She turned and saw Arbeni. Shocked, she widened her eyes and whispered to herself: He's following me…

She wiped the sudden sweat from her hand. How did he get here? He had no invitation, wasn't on the list, hadn't told anyone.

"— Arben? What are you doing here?"

He smiled softly, not forced.

"— I knew you'd be here. It felt strange not to be… near you."

"But I… I didn't tell you I'd come."

Arbeni lowered his head slightly.

"— No, you didn't. But I needed to know. It's my duty… to know."

She froze.

"— Your duty? What does that mean?"

His voice became calm. Very calm.

So calm it was terrifying.

"— To protect you."

"— From whom?"

He leaned closer:

"— From people you don't see… but I do."

Elira took a step back, unsure if this was still the man she had loved.

The Beginning of Terror
That night, when she returned home, she found a short note at her door:
"Do not meet Baç Dhelpra again. He is not a clean man."
Elira looked up.
How did Arbeni know she had an interview with Baç Dhelpra tomorrow?
Why was this note on her door? How did he know?
She took a deep breath. And for the first time, she asked herself the same question she often asked others as a journalist:
"Am I being watched?"
But she didn't know surveillance had moved to the next phase—
The phase where a man's love could become someone else's greatest misfortune.
He sent Elira secret messages. Not ordinary messages—but strange, fragmented sentences, wrapped in false philosophy, quoting books that didn't exist.Messages only a man on the edge of reason could write:
"The road has eyes. You don't see them, but they see what you hide."
"Remember, truth is a fire that burns, not a warmth."
"There is no greater betrayal than silence."
He began keeping her awake at night, always after two a.m., because then "the city sleeps and truths move freely."
Sabotaging Her Meetings
It always happened in strange ways:

Someone called Elira for a false emergency.
An anonymous phone call warned of "car trouble," or "someone waiting for you." "Fallen to the ground while shopping,"
"Someone calling her for an 'urgent matter,'" etc.
Arbeni never shows up in person.
He only leaves traces. Cold. Invisible. Terrifying.He knows all her friends, watches their schedules, where they dine, even the way they laugh. And every detail he uses against her."One night he wrote her,":
"Every time you laugh with others, remember that somewhere, someone is watching you laugh."
Elira's friends become targets.
Arbeni convinces himself that each of them is the "weak link," "the cause of moral corruption." "There's a tendency for her to hide things. She doesn't stay in one place for long. Avoids eye contact. Her way of dressing has changed."

Arbeni takes this report as absolute truth, a manual to decipher every action of hers. Every word becomes a guide for even riskier moves, and his paranoia begins to swell. He starts monitoring every detail, recording every moment, interpreting every silence as a potential threat.

Shadows in Action

The dark network awakens, moving silently, filling the night with tension. From that night on, everything changes. Every light in her room, every sleepy step, every tiny

sound becomes part of a terrifying puzzle. Arbeni senses he is stepping into a high-stakes game, where reality and imagination collide, and each of his actions could have unpredictable consequences.

The night it all began remains vivid in his mind: shadows moving, eyes capturing every detail, darkness itself a silent partner in every motion. Arbeni is now trapped in the web of his own paranoia, living between two worlds: the real, and the one forged by fear and his need for control.

It was the night when Tirana seemed empty, like a city abandoned by time. The streets stretched long and silent, the streetlights flickering like exhausted candles, the wind stirring a fine dust that sparkled like sparks beneath the yellow lamps. The city breathed slowly, as if sensing something approaching.

And on that night, the shadows received their first orders.

In a closed office, away from eyes and noise, Bac Dhelpra—the old, cynical head, trained in the old Sigurimi surveillance methods—gathered his people. His face was stone, expressionless, like someone who had seen too much and no longer believed in anything.

"The city must be seen with our own eyes," he said slowly. "Every movement. Every breath. Everything must be monitored."

His voice was cold, almost stripped of humanity—a voice that didn't question, didn't doubt. It only commanded.

Around the table sat eight men, dressed in black jackets. Their bodies were motionless, statues carved from darkness, eyes trained to observe without being seen, to record without leaving traces. Red masks hung around their necks—not yet donned—waiting for the moment. Symbols, orders, and curses all at once.

At the center of the table lay Elira's file.
Sheets arranged meticulously, long-distance photographs, dry handwriting, entry and exit logs—fragments of life reduced to documents. A single name, placed at the heart of an old mechanism of fear, still functioning even as time had changed its face.

Naturally, she was the only woman within that dark network of men, forged in an era when control was a virtue and suspicion an unwritten law.

Bac Dhelpra leaned over the table, fingertips brushing the file as if it were fragile but dangerous.
No one spoke. The door closed slowly behind them. The click of the lock echoed like a heavy seal, one that would not open easily.

The pursuit began.

The first three shadows detached themselves from the city's darkness.
They moved silently. Without a trace. Without names. Only functions within an order.
Tirana didn't see them. But from that night, she was no longer alone.

Shadow 1: "The Dog"

A tall man with empty eyes, a former field operative.
Always carried an old radio.
His duty: foot surveillance—tracking Elira around every corner, every doorway, every shop.
He took position near her home.
When Elira left for work, he followed silently.
Never too close. Never too far. Always at the perfect shadow's distance.

Shadow 2: "The Safe"

Silent, heavyset, with large hands. A specialist in doors, locks, and secret entries.
He monitored the spaces she moved through.
At night, when her building was quiet, he opened the lower gate without leaving a mark. Observed the stairs, listened to the pipes, saw the shoeprints—and reported to Arbeni:
"There were two additional visitors this week. One male."

Arbeni turned pale. "Go check it immediately!" he shouted.

Even though it was just the professional imagination of "The Safe."

Shadow 3: "The Caretaker"

A former signals analyst. No longer worked with cables, now worked with people.
His duty: observe Elira's face, her expressions, her anxiety.
He took positions in cafés, libraries, city centers.
Never took his eyes off her for 2–3 hours straight.
In his first report:
"Shows nervousness. Frequently touches neck. This is a sign of guilt."

Arbeni laughed maniacally: "I knew it! She's hiding something!"

Red Masks in Motion

After two weeks of observation, Bac Dhelpra gave the order:
"Put on the masks."

Red masks, blood-colored—a sign to Arbeni that "the operation has begun."
The shadows moved at night through the city's neighborhoods. Approaching buildings, emerging from darkness, taking positions unseen. Only the street dogs followed them with fearful eyes.

Beneath Elira's window, two of them hid among the trees, eyes on her sleeping form.
"She moves a lot in her sleep," they reported.
Arbeni read the report five times.

The First Major Operation – Night Surveillance

On a cold evening, Elira went to meet a colleague. Nothing suspicious. Just an ordinary walk in Bllok, cobblestone lights gently illuminating the street, city sounds blending with the quick steps of pedestrians.
But for Arbeni, every movement was an alarm. He couldn't bear not knowing every detail. He called Bac in a cold voice: "Start the operation. I want every step she takes today."
Three different cars were deployed across the city. Inside them were his operatives, monitoring every movement, every face that might approach her. All vehicles reported back real-time information.
Meanwhile, Elira felt a chill on her back. She turned immediately but saw nothing—just the dim streetlights, shadows stretching over the pavement, and the empty road ahead.
But one shadow was there, at a distance, following her with a terrifying calm, marking every step.
That night, as she went to bed, her phone received the first anonymous message.
One of her closest friends begins seeing cars tailing her.
Another finds an anonymous note on the door: "You know

why."
A female friend receives a call: a stranger warns her to stay away from Elira, "for the good of the city."
In reality, it's all just the reflection of a paranoia eating away at his mind.In his eyes, love has become a silent war—a moral battle in which he is the lone soldier, the only one who "sees the truth."
But in reality—he is just a man slowly sinking into the dark territories of himself.Methods of Surveillance Against EliraDaily Observation by the "City Shadows"
Former agents track her routines:
The streets she takes from home to work, the cafés she visits, the times she steps onto her balcony, the people she speaks to even for a few seconds.
Every evening, hand-written reports—like in the transition years—ardelivered to Arbeni.
Infiltrators in Her Environment
Arbeni pays:
The waiter at her morning café, the receptionist at her workplace, a bookstore clerk she often greets.
All report her movements and moods to him, unaware of why they are doing it.
Control of Calls and Unknown Numbers
Using former officer contacts, Arbeni identifies every number that calls Elira, discovers the profession and address of each contact, and even logs their schedules as "behavioral patterns."
He convinces himself he can detect "betrayal" this way.
Long-Distance Secret Photography

One of his operatives uses an old telephoto camera:
Photos of her waiting for the bus, laughing with a friend, stopping to tie her hair.
Arbeni keeps them in a folder labeled "Project Tirana."
Tail Cars at Safe Distance
Never the same car. Never the same driver.
She is made to feel it's coincidence—but at every turn, someone is watching, recording the time, place, and face.
Observation of Her Friends
For each of Elira's friends, a small file is opened—almost like a secret registry:
Daily schedules, professions, family connections, places they go with her, shared habits, subtle gestures revealing themselves.
Every detail is a piece of a mosaic Arbeni tries to decode.
He searches for "who she loves," like a detective who spares no detail.
The deeper he digs, the more unhinged he becomes.
His thoughts swing from one extreme to the other: a deleted message, a suspicious "like," a seemingly harmless comment—each a hidden signal.
Every glance she gives someone else becomes doubt; every smile, secret evidence.
Paranoia transforms shared memories into dangerous scenes, where every friend is a rival and every conversation a conspiracy.
Social Media Control
A former intelligence officer would be proud of his attention to detail:

Arbeni tracks her online activity—login times, tagged photos she doesn't notice, the people who like her posts most, messages deleted immediately.
Every reaction becomes evidence in his imaginary ledger: a delayed like, a casual comment, or a lack of response—all are coded messages.
He sometimes stays up late, comparing images, tracking the last times she changed her status, recording every detail in a table only he understands.
Every tiny piece of information builds a complete story—and each story turns Arbeni into an obsessive investigator, blurring the line between reality and imagination.
He monitors everyone in her orbit.
Among them is a technician. He is Arbeni's most dangerous asset: always nearby, always available, knowledgeable about the details Arbeni demands.
Every word, every ordinary gesture, takes on new meaning—sometimes innocent, sometimes threatening.
He struggles to distinguish normal from secret, truth from a sign created by chance.
As days pass, Arbeni sinks deeper into her social network, losing touch with reality and with her other friends—creating his own universe where every friend is part of a secret plan, every hidden message proof, every quiet moment of Elira's life a dramatic scene in the theater of his mind.
He enters Elira's home posing as an "antenna repairman," placing a small microphone on the stairs that picks up only general noises—but it's enough for Arbeni.

Every shadow, every step in the hallway, becomes "evidence of her hidden movements."
Night Surveillance
Two of his operatives lurk in the dark, watching her window from afar.
Every move she makes becomes a message: turning off the light, opening the curtain, shuffling papers before bed.
Arbeni reads them as "codes," secret signs in a world only he can decipher.
He believes even how she turns off the lights, the rhythm of her movements, or the way her hands brush over the table, speaks of hidden things no one else can see.
Every ordinary gesture becomes a coded message.
Fake Psychological Report on EliraA former officer, known for behavioral analysis, prepared a carefully crafted but false report for Arbeni: He said to Arbeni:
— "Now is our time. People are scared, doctor. Chaos is the richest soil for old ideologies. We'll push them to vote for socialism. They'll beg for it… out of fear. We'll create a reality where communism doesn't return with guns… but with panic."
Arbeni listened, mesmerized.
— "It will be my shadows that do it…" he whispered, eyes wide.
Bac Dhelpra tapped him lightly on the shoulder:
— "No, doctor. Not your shadows. Our shadows."
From that moment, the duo became inseparable—a toxic fusion of paranoia and pure malice.

The Dark Year – 1997

When the chaos of 1997 erupted, Arbeni nearly lost his mind with joy.

The pyramid schemes collapsed, people lost their savings, the streets filled with pain, screams, fires… and weapons. Weapons poured from army depots, opening like safes with no codes. Some took up arms to protect their families, others out of panic, others out of despair. And some simply to feel powerful.

This was Dr. Arbeni's celebration.

— "Finally! Finally chaos!" he shouted, watching the news on an old TV.

— "Now I am king… the king of this red city!"

He drew a large red circle on a map of Tirana, calling it the District of Shadows. On that map, he marked the locations where people in red caps would appear… where fake panics would be created, controlled fires, false calls for coups, conspiracy rumors spread in the markets, and even fabricated nighttime surveillance reports.

— "This Tirana will become a laboratory of fear," he told Bac Dhelpra.

— "A laboratory, doctor—a laboratory!" the other replied with sly enthusiasm.

— "Then the people, tired and frightened… will beg for the return of the 'old order.'"

— "And I… I will have control," Arbeni said, in a voice that was no longer fully his own.

In the days that followed, the capital began to feel a strange tremor beneath its skin.

People spotted red caps in the darkness, heard frightening rumors, talked of the old Sigurimi shadows returning, of communists scheming to regain power.

No one knew that many of these scenes were orchestrated by Arbeni and Bac Dhelpra. The city was slowly transforming into a theater of madness—and Arbeni was its director.

The Woman Who Didn't Speak

Dr. Arbeni's wife—Elira—had lived quietly beside him for years, never knowing if she was a wife, a servant, or just an invisible element in his life. They had never been officially married. In Arbeni's eyes, she was "unregistered property," a domestic shadow that had to remain inside the frame of his control.During the chaotic nights of 1997, Elira began to fear he might kill her.

She could feel his unbalanced energy: eyes red from sleeplessness, strange movements, mutterings, inexplicable laughter.

One night, he entered her room silently. She sat with her hands clasped, listening to the city outside. Dogs barked. People ran down the streets. Gunfire echoed in the distance.— "Why did you tremble today?" he asked in a low voice that made her blood rush to her head.

— "I didn't tremble, Arbeni…" she replied fearfully.

He leaned close to her face, so near she could feel the weight of his heavy breath.

— "I saw your shadow move. Are you signaling? Or are you with them?"

— "With whom?" she stammered.

— "With the red shadows!" he shouted.

She reached to touch his arm, and he recoiled as if struck by a knife.
— "Don't touch me!" he screamed. "Your body is the source of information! Don't you understand… every cell of yours belongs to someone else!"
The Woman Who Shouldn't Exist

Elira lived with Dr. Arbeni… The Night of the Clash
One night, as gunfire filled the air and the city seemed to breathe in heat and blood, he suddenly entered the room where Elira sat. The door slammed behind him with a dry crack, cutting through the air. She huddled in the chair by the window, hands crossed over her lap, listening to the screams outside, shattering glass, and motorcycles speeding past like fleeing shadows.
He stared at her, eyes searching for signs, proof, hidden meaning. Silence stretched, heavy, almost threatening.
— "You've closed yourself off," he said finally, in a low but charged voice.
— "I'm just listening to what's happening outside, Arbeni…" she replied calmly, not turning her head, as if her words needed no proof.
He stepped closer, so near that his shadow fell over her face, blocking the window's light. His presence was cold, controlled, like a question with no answer.
— "Your shadow moved," he said slowly. "Not out of fear. Out of intent. Are you signaling? Or playing with them?"
— "With whom?" she asked, finally raising her eyes to his, calm in defiance.
He raised a finger, as if marking an invisible guilt in the

air—a secret unnamed but heavier than the city noise outside.
— "With the red shadows! They speak. And you speak to them… through the tremors of your body. You're sending signals. Do you understand how dangerous this is? For you?"
Elira reached lightly for his arm to calm him. He recoiled as if struck by a knife.
— "Don't touch me!" he screamed. "Your cells carry information! You are a wave, Elira! A wave controlled by someone else!"
She rose slowly.
— "I'm just Elira… I'm not a wave, not a shadow…"
Arbeni laughed, a laugh stripped of anything human.
— "Yes, you are Elira… the Shadow Elira. Now you belong to me, only as much as I allow. But I have my shadows. And in the city… they are more numerous than ever."

A distant explosion sounded in the streets.
Elira flinched. Arbeni saw it. His face lit up with triumphant madness.
— "See?! I saw it! You trembled! Someone activated you! Your shadow is part of my project… And I will uncover everything!"
She didn't speak. In her eyes, there was only one thing: pure fear.
Dr. Arbeni's Red Room
The room where Dr. Arbeni slept was no longer a bedroom. It looked like a strange bunker, with thick curtains blocking

every ray of light, three red lamps in the corners, walls plastered with papers covered in numbers, pencils, and chaotic diagrams.
In the center sat a large wooden table, where he perched like a judge, a commander… or a madman.Elira was in the next room, the door open. She could hear everything.
He had installed listening devices everywhere in their home, which could be turned freely into observation points.
The Beginning of the Madness Ritual

Arbeni rose from his chair and studied the wall as if someone were there.
— "Good evening…" he said to the wall.
His voice was soft, laughing, sick.
— "I've been expecting you. You're late. Why are you late?"
He waited, as if expecting an answer. Then he slammed his hand on the table.
— "Don't lie to me!" he shouted. "You are always here! I see you even when you are behind my back!"
Elira raised her hand to her mouth. His voice was becoming more dangerous by the second.
Arbeni approached a corner of the room where the shadow of the lamp moved slightly.
— "And you?" he said to the shadow in a low voice. "You spied on Elira, didn't you? You saw how she trembled last night… Don't hide! SPEAK!"
He raised his hand as if to strike the shadow.
But the shadow was just a shadow.

— "There you are!" he suddenly yelled. "Now we give the orders. We must move fast. Tirana is in our hands. Chaos is my king, and I am its father. Now… fall in line!"
He raised both hands, commanding an invisible army.

— "First shadow, go to the Lana! Spread panic, make people think another depot will explode.
Second shadow, move among the buildings in the Paris Commune! Listen to conversations—I want to know every word.
Third shadow…" He approached the wall and whispered— "Follow Elira. I don't trust her anymore. Moves like a suspicious wave. I want a report by morning!"
He stepped back, inspired by himself.
— "Now go! Discipline! My orders are final!"
The Moment of Pure Fear
At that moment, a scrap of paper fell from the table.
A tiny sound, just a dry rustle, like the last breath of a secret. But for Arbeni, it was a huge signal. An invisible alarm exploding in his mind.He lifted his head violently. His eyes burned, not from light, but from fear transformed into doubt, and doubt into madness.
— "Who moved? Which one of you touched my paper?!" he screamed, in a voice that didn't ask but condemned.
The air froze. The walls seemed to close in even more. Then he turned toward the door and saw Elira.
She stood frozen in the doorway, like a forgotten figure in an old photograph. Her hands trembled, fingers shaking without reason. Her face was pale, as if someone had wiped away the color with a wet cloth. She dared not speak or

move.

He saw her. She saw him. Silence became heavier than his screams, pressing the chest, leaving no room for breath. In that void, every thought became an accusation. The accusations multiplied.

No answer came—

— "Elira…" he finally said, slowly, savoring the name as if to enjoy it or destroy her with it at the same time. "Are you following me? Spying on me? Speaking to my shadows without my permission?"His voice was low now, but more dangerous. No need for shouting; suspicion had taken shape, had a name.

Elira opened her mouth to speak, but the words tangled in her throat. She realized that whatever she said, he would no longer believe.

And she, innocent in appearance, sat there like a silent witness to a storm that had just begun.

— "No…" she whispered, broken. "I'm just… afraid. He frightens me."He laughed, a dissonant, unhinged laugh.

— "Fear? Fear is my medicine, Elira. You live because of my fear. Without fear, you would not exist. You spy on me… because you will

know the orders. You are a shadow too, Elira. A shadow who does not yet understand her role."

She stepped back. She was shocked, exhausted, and panicked. And in that moment, Elira understood.

Dr. Arbeni was no longer merely paranoid. He had crossed the line. He had declared war on reality itself. He had become the leader of an army that did not exist.

She realized he was sinking into a world where shadows had names, roles, missions… and she herself was one of them.
Elira left the room in silence, her heart pounding.
A cold knot in her stomach. He was lost. Completely lost.
He was no longer just paranoid—he was a full-blown psychopath. That night, she confirmed it.
Bac Dhelpra – The Architect of Darkness
In the damp basements of 1997 Tirana, where the smell of concrete mixed with gunpowder and fear, moved a man known only as Bac Dhelpra. There was no official file on him, no clear photograph, no fixed identity. He was a man of many names, many faces, many lives. A ghost of regimes past, a dark spirit of fallen systems, a master manipulator.

He was the one who had told Dr. Arbeni that the "red shadows" were real.
He was the one who had found Arbeni's weak mind, prodded it, and slowly guided it into labyrinths of paranoia.
He was the one feeding his madness.
That night, Bac Dhelpra entered Arbeni's house without knocking. The door had been left open by Arbeni himself.
Elira screamed in terror when she saw him—a man who seemed like an action-movie criminal and, at the same time, another kind of paranoid. Dressed entirely in black with a black cap, he merged seamlessly with his own darkness.
Dhelpra did not fear her; he sensed her like a wolf senses prey.
He moved slowly, rubbing his hands, a sharp smile on his

face.— "Where are you, doctor?" he called, his tone sweet and cynical.

The Meeting of Two MadmenArbeni emerged from his room, hair wild, eyes wide.
— "You came?" he said. "My first shadow said you would."

Bac Dhelpra laughed.
— "Yes, yes, the shadows… you've grown them well, doctor. Now they work better than the old Sigurimi ever did."
Arbeni lifted his head proudly.
— "They're trained. I give them tasks. They report back. They're building the network."
— "The network of what?" Dhelpra asked, his voice urging him to speak more. "The closed network, right? Watch, inform, stay silent."
Arbeni raised his hands as if preaching. Looking him directly in the eye, he said:
— "The network of return!"
— "Yes," said Bac. "The Sigurimi never disappeared; it only slept. We will restore structures across the country. People need fear. Fear creates order. Now we come to power, doctor. And we won't let go. People will want us, even though we give nothing. We give only dogma. And yet they will vote for us."

Dhelpra watched with half-lidded eyes, smiling with secret satisfaction. He pushed him, fed him, guided him with words.

— "And the people?" he asked softly. "What about the people?"
— "Nothing will happen," Arbeni replied. He laughed at the end, darkly amused.
Arbeni stepped closer.
— "The people are a crowd. Crowds are manipulable. Especially now…" He smiled with frozen teeth. "Especially now that they have weapons, that they're terrified, that they don't know where to run. Chaos is our time. They will vote for anything that gives them security—even if that security is red. I am the king of chaos. You are the man who lit the fuse. Together… we are the new history."
Bac Dhelpra nodded, a master approving his pupil.
— "Well done, doctor. You're ripening. And now… the next step."
— "Which?" Arbeni asked.
— "The Kombinat path. That's where word will spread that the 'enemies of the people' are coming. You will step among the people, accompanied by your red shadows. You will speak. You will declare the government has fallen. And that only a strong hand can save Tirana."
Arbeni ignited.
— "I will speak!
—I will speak for socialism!
—I will speak for the threat!
—I will speak for the return!"
— "Yes," said Bac Dhelpra. "You will speak for fear. And for hope. Those two are the greatest weapons of regimes."
Elira Hears Everything

In the corridor, Elira pressed against the wall, holding her breath. She heard it all—Arbeni's words, Bac Dhelpra's urging, the plans, the scenarios, the madness taking flight. She realized that she was no longer the only one in danger. The entire city was.

Arbeni was no longer merely insane.

Now he was a weapon in the hands of a vile, manipulative man who wanted to resurrect a dead era.

And Elira, heart frozen, realized: if she did nothing, Tirana would burn.

And Arbeni would be the one to ignite the spark.

The Red Night at Kombinat

Tirana had entered a night never to be forgotten. A night where the sky seemed to furrow its own brows in pain, and the streets mocked the fear of its people with constant gunfire, screams, erratic movement, and a red fog born from burning tires.

At the edge of Kombinat, in a dark square among abandoned factories, a crowd was gathering. A tired, frightened, armed crowd, driven by panic, rumors, and news deliberately spread by Bac Dhelpra's people.

— "The enemies are coming!"

— "The government has fallen!"

— "Only a strong hand can restore order!"

The crowd murmured, swaying like a broad, invisible beast. At the center, a makeshift platform had been erected. Two old factory spotlights cast red light, creating the famous shadows that Dr. Arbeni called "his army." The shadows seemed to dance.The Arrival of Dr. Arbeni

Arbeni appeared like a prophet of darkness, seated in the back of an old armored car, accompanied by three men dressed in black with red caps. They were former Sigurimi agents, unemployed, bought with money and fear. Elira was not with him. She followed from a distance, camouflaged in the crowd, a scarf thrown over her head, hands trembling. Her heart pounded so hard she thought it might be heard.

The car stopped. Bac Dhelpra opened the door himself, like a servant of the devil.

— "Your time has come, doctor," he said, guiding him toward the platform.

The doctor muttered to himself: The prophet of darkness has arrived.

He adjusted the buttons on his black jacket, and with measured steps under the watch of his guards, he cast a gaze over the crowd. Some almost worshiped this mad figure, walking toward the podium like the messiah of darkness. Arbeni's eyes burned—not with faith, but with an inner fire fed by fear and false grandeur. He no longer saw people; he saw enemies, conspirators, faces that shifted according to his suspicions. Paranoia guided him like an invisible hand, and his mind was filled with the conviction that he was the chosen one, the only one who "knew the truth."

Behind him, like a collective hallucination, the red shadows clung to walls, to the ground, to the crowd's consciousness. They were not people, but blind ideas, symbols of violence and obedience, ready for command, for orders, for sacrifice.

To Arbeni, they seemed to wait for just one signal from him—a flick of the hand, a word tossed like amatch.

The Speech of Madness

He climbed the platform with deliberate, almost ceremonial steps. Each step seemed to lift him above the ordinary ground, drawing him closer to the myth he had built around himself. The crowd was silent—not out of respect, but from a mixture of fear and curiosity. Silence hung over the square like a heavy fabric.

Arbeni stopped in the center.

He raised his hands to the sky, as if seeking a blessing—or summoning invisible witnesses. His fingers tightened, and for a moment, it seemed as if he held everyone's fate in his hands.

— "I know!" he shouted, his words striking the air like a blow.

— "I know who you are! I know who you are, against us!"

The crowd did not move. Some faces froze; others bent slightly. Arbeni continued, his voice now filled with pathos and menace:

— "They hide among us. They whisper. They write letters. They topple truth from our tables! We will find you……"

In his mind, the red shadows stirred. He felt he was obeying a mission greater than himself. Every sentence he spoke reinforced his belief that he was at war with invisible enemies—and that this war justified everything.

He lowered his hands slowly and pointed toward the crowd.

— "Do not be afraid!" he shouted. "Fear is their weapon. I am here to protect you. I am your voice. I am the shadow that does not fear the dark!"
At that moment, scattered, hesitant applause rose—uncertain, but a sign of loyalty. Arbeni took it as proof of victory. His eyes burned even brighter. No one realized that his speech was no longer for the crowd, but for the shadows only he could see—and that had begun speaking in his name.
— "People of Tirana!" he bellowed, his voice tearing through the air.
— "Today marks the beginning of a new era! Today our darkness becomes light! Today chaos becomes state!"
— "The country is abandoned! The enemies approach! You are defenseless! But I am here to guide you! I am the eye that sees all! I am the mind that understands all! I am the one who speaks with the shadows you cannot see!"
Strange shouts rose from the crowd. Some laughed. Some were frightened. Some took him seriously.
Arbeni continued, intoxicated by his own voice:
— "You know who I am! I am Dr. Arbeni! Do I heal bodies? Yes. But now I will heal society! With these hands…"—he lifted them as if holding the sky itself—"…I have treated thousands! Now… I will treat an entire people! I have healed people everywhere of cancer, of severe illness. Now I will heal a nation!"
The crowd stirred, confused. Bac Dhelpra signaled one of his men, who set off a large firecracker into the air—a red explosion that lit everything. Arbeni ignited further.

— "We will restore order! We will restore power! We will restore structure! It is time for Albania to have firm direction again!"

— "There is no democracy without fear! There is no freedom without control!"
The crowd shivered. Some cheered. Some fled in fear. Some began to believe.
— "I will save you from the Jews, the bloodsuckers of fifty years! I will protect you from false doctrines of equality and heroes. You are poor, and you have been robbed because you believed in the rotten capitalist system! Capitalism is a tool of the bankers, the hyenas of this nation, not the workers who sacrifice their lives and gain nothing!"
Bac Dhelpra smiled, his cold, cruel smile. He knew Dr. Arbeni was becoming his perfect instrument.
Elira – The Invisible Prisoner
At home, in the gray room where she once lit candles for peace, Elira had become a shadow of herself. She no longer lived there—she merely existed. Arbeni had locked her inside—not with visible keys, but with fear. Around her, he had placed guards—some paid, some merely cowards.

Elira watched the truth unfold, hidden in the crowd. She saw the man she had once hoped she could save. He spoke of the return of communism, of freedom with control, of fear as a weapon that brings order and calm.
His left eye trembled like a taut wire. He was no longer the Arbeni she had known. He was a mad ghost in a human body.

She would not allow the Shadow Man to ignite the city. She would stop him. Even if it meant risking her own life.
She turned and vanished into the darkness, while on the makeshift podium, Dr. Arbeni raised his hands to the sky like a prophet of an era no one wanted to return.
Tirana had become a red city. Flags, banners, uniforms—even the faces of the people seemed washed in the same color. It was the moment the right-wing government fell. And the socialists—former communists—returned. Dr. Arbeni saw this as a divine sign. A declaration of war. A personal triumph.He was now under Bac Dhelpra's orders, the former Sigurimi agent who now controlled every corner of SHIK. And Arbeni, with all his madness, became their loudspeaker. In secret meetings, in basements, in dark offices filled with old files, he spoke with a harsh voice:— "Minorities cannot lead nations! Minorities are a dying phenomenon. Great nations became great because God intended it so! That is nature!"They applauded—not because they believed, but because they needed a madman who spoke without fear.

Elira – The Invisible Prisoner
At home, in the gray room where she once lit candles for peace, Elira had become a shadow of herself. She no longer lived there—she merely existed. Arbeni had locked her inside—not with visible keys, but with fear. Around her, he had stationed guards—some paid, some merely cowards, people… Faceless, obedient to anyone who held money and power. Elira could barely walk from anxiety. Every

step felt alien, as if the floor itself no longer recognized her. Her breath came short, fragmented, as if she were always on the brink of telling a story that would never be heard. He controlled everything: her phone, the lights, the window, even her silence. He monitored her breath, her gaze, the exact moment she closed her eyes. Everything had to pass through his suspicion.

One evening, when Tirana buzzed with the voices of drunken politicians and the streets trembled with empty speeches and rotten promises, he appeared suddenly in the room. No knock. No warning. His eyes were fierce—the eyes of a man who no longer spoke to people, only to his own ghosts. The eyes of a man who had lost the boundary between power and madness. He approached slowly, part judge, part executioner.

Elira didn't speak. She knew every word could be used against her.

"I know you speak," he said finally, in a low, almost gentle voice, more terrifying than a scream. "Even when you're silent, you speak."

And in that gray room, where candles had once burned for peace, darkness became law. An invisible world—Elira! he said. And—he shouted—Why is the corridor light off?

She lifted her head slowly. "I didn't turn it off… the power went out, Arben."

He laughed, that broken, split laugh. "No. No! Your shadow turned it off! I told you: Shadows are connected to your right brain, to your emotions. When you lie, the light

goes out. Do you understand?"
She lowered her eyes. He approached, shaking her phone in his hand.
"Why is there a deleted number here? Who called you? Who did you speak with? Who's texting you? Why won't you tell me?" He fired questions like bullets.
"No one texted me…" she said in a hoarse voice. "I deleted it because… it was spam."He pushed her back—not hard, just enough to remind her she had no name, no voice anymore.
"Women are traitors!" he shouted in her face. "Always have been! That's what the shadows tell me! They confirm it! You are part of a plan…"Elira's knees buckled. She realized, finally: Arbeni had no turning back. He was talking to people who didn't exist. Giving orders that made no sense. Waging a war only he could see.

Dialogue of Madness
He sat in the middle of the room, staring at the ceiling as if someone else were there.
"Order 17!" he said in a commanding voice. "No one leaves the door without my permission. Stop all outside communication. Stop the waves! Stop excess breathing! Elira could be sending messages with her eyelashes!"
Then he turned to her:
"You're sending signals with your eyes. Don't open them too wide. When you do, you betray me."
Elira could no longer hold herself.
"Arben… please… stop. I'm only Elira. I'm not a shadow,

I'm not a traitor…"
He paused a second, then whispered: "No, you're not Elira. You are the channel. Through you, they speak… those who wish me harm."
Silence fell in the room. The silence that closes a chapter. The silence before the greatest storm. Elira realized she had entered a prison—not a state prison, not one with iron bars, but an invisible prison, built from the madness of a man who once had been someone… and now was the loss of himself.

Orders of Darkness
Elira felt, for the first time, something inside her crack. It wasn't just fear. Not just anxiety. It was deeper—a fracture within, as if her body and mind no longer cooperated.
She sat on the floor, near the cold radiator, her hands shaking. Voices echoed in her ears—voices that weren't her own. No, not the voices of madness… but the voices of the guards below, speaking of her, laughing at her, treating her like an object.
Outside, Tirana buzzed with the calls of the Red Night. And then the door slammed open. Arbeni entered, as if stepping onto a stage for a grand press conference.His eyes shone with a terrifying light—not the light of thought, but the light of delirium.
"Let's begin!" he said triumphantly, locking the door behind him. "I must issue today's orders. Watch, Elira. You will be a witness. You will see that I am a patriot… a man working for the nation!"

He pressed a hand to his ear, as if listening to someone.
"Yes, Commander… I hear you…" he muttered. "No, no, there's no leak of information. I have my wife isolated… she is under total control."
Elira covered her face with her hands. He noticed.
"Why are you hiding?!" he shouted. "You must listen! This nation stands because of men like me! Not women who tremble like rags!"

He continued, pacing the room as if commanding an invisible army:
"Order 23: Red forces are to disperse through the blocks. Turn off lights in the alleys, monitor the right-side shops. Arrest the shadows walking silently. These are agents of the minorities!"
"Order 24: Remove all Democratic Party posters from the streets. The nation cannot have two voices. One voice, one center!"
He stopped suddenly and fixed his gaze on Elira.
"You… why are you shaking?" he asked suspiciously. "Are you sending messages to someone now? Through your breathing? Your breath is faster than usual…"
Elira leaned against the wall, her throat dry.
"Arben, please… you're scaring me…" she whispered.
He leaned over her, gripping her chin.
"Your fear proves I am right!" he roared. "The Security Service never errs! Never!"
Right shadows were moving through the house, he claimed.
"Elira, I feel them. I hear them at night. You invited them!"

His voice slammed against the walls like a judgment without trial.

Elira could hold back no longer. She broke into tears—not screaming, but in a silent, desperate flow, as if something inside her was finally splitting apart.Her shoulders shook, hands covering her face, as if to hide from his eyes and from reality itself.

For a moment, Arbeni released her. As if his madness had grown tired of itself, if only for a few seconds. His breath deepened, his shoulders slumped. He turned away and sank heavily into a chair.Then something even more terrifying happened.could hear."Yes… yes, I know," he murmured, shaking his head slightly. "No, no…" Still… Proof was needed. She had to confess herself. His eyes were fixed on the void, as if someone was standing directly in front of him.

Elira realized she was no longer merely a victim of suspicion, but a witness to the destruction of a mind.

"Do you understand me, or not?" he continued, with a false calm. "It's not personal. It's a matter of security."

At that moment, silence felt heavier than any scream. Because madness, when it starts speaking to itself and calling it justice, no longer needs real enemies.

Then Arbeni began speaking to the shadows:

"Yes, boss… I understand… Yes, yes… we can eliminate it. Yes, yes… we'll turn off all the lights. We'll keep the people in darkness. Darkness controls people. It keeps the nation standing. Yes, yes, I'll start immediately."

Then he turned back to Elira:

"I see you… every hour. Every minute. Don't even think about escaping. Wherever you go, my shadows are red. And they will find you."

Elira didn't speak. Her eyes had gone cloudy. She realized that if no one stopped him, he could become a threat to the entire city—or worse… to her.

The Impossible Divorce

"Man is not born free; freedom is earned only when he dares to leave what destroys him." Every chain that binds him in darkness, every fear that drowns him in silence, every dictate that twists a person within—it is a dictatorship. These are invisible prisons.

Conversely, freedom is not a gift. It is a battle, a journey into the darkness of oneself, where each step is a risk, each decision an act of courage. Only the one who dares to break the inner wall, to challenge his own shadows, can lift his head and say: "I am free."

"Fear is the shadow that follows a person until he learns to walk toward the light."

It is a companion that does not leave easily, invisible and relentless. Many try to avoid it, erase it, deny it—but it always follows. Light is not the absence of fear; light is the courage to move forward despite it. Every step toward truth, every step toward light, weakens the shadow until it finally disappears—or becomes a distant memory. Freedom and light are not gifts; they are the result of confronting darkness within and beyond oneself.

By now, he had already escaped reality. He was no longer Dr. Arbeni—the man who once listened, healed, and spoke with calm clarity. What remained was only a shadow deformed by his illness. His love, once warm and restrained, had turned into something else: a blind obsession, a dark force without boundaries.
He now posed a danger to everyone. Especially to her.
Elira knew that one day he could be healed. She knew that somewhere deep inside, the man she had once loved still existed. But that day was far away—terribly far away. Until then, every step she took was at risk, every breath a struggle to survive.
His love for her had become a slow-strangling anaconda, day by day, night by night. It didn't squeeze immediately; it kept her bound, exhausting her, numbing her, stealing her air silently. He now lived in an imaginary world, built from his illness—a parallel reality where she belonged only to him, where every refusal was betrayal and every distance a conspiracy.
Elira wanted to escape, but memories of the past held her captive. Memories returned uninvited: every touch, every caress, every compliment he had once given was real, beautiful, human. He had loved her with a purity that now seemed rare. And precisely that made everything even more painful.

Because now that love had turned into a threat.
Her life was in danger—not from hate, but from a sick love that didn't know how to stop. And as she walked toward

the unknown, Elira understood that her survival depended on a single decision: to save herself, even if it meant leaving behind the man who had once been everything.

A Phone Call That Could Change Everything

She took a deep breath, as if diving underwater for the last time. Her fingers shook over the phone's keyboard—not from cold, but from a fear accumulated over days, perhaps months. Every letter she typed felt like a step across a rickety bridge.

Lawyer: "You must help me. I can't stay here any longer. He's coming."

She read the message twice before sending it. For a moment, she hesitated, as if even the phone could hear her breath and betray her. Then she pressed "send." The screen went dark, and her heart pounded, trying to escape her chest.

Daily Pursuit and Fear

Every step outside the house felt like a carefully laid trap. Cold air slid across her face but brought no comfort. She walked slowly, scanning around her, with the unshakable sense that any shadow could be him. People passed by, absorbed in their own worries, unaware that fear could walk so close, so quietly, so invisibly.

His car, always hidden somewhere in the background, had become an obsession. Every dark window, every glass reflection, every engine starting behind her seemed like a sign of his return. Even when he wasn't there… She could feel him watching—like a shadow that never left her side, always hovering just beyond her light.

Unknown phone calls were the most terrifying. The ring

stole her breath. And even when she didn't answer, the silence that followed was just as menacing. Messages—short, cold, written in ordinary words—always carried the same meaning: He was watching, waiting, closing in.

She realized that fear was no longer a passing feeling. It had become a way of life—a constant, endless vigil. And as she clutched the phone, waiting for a reply, she knew that call—the one call—was her last hope of escaping this closed circle.

Every morning, stepping outside her house felt like entering a trap. The air, though open, pressed down on her chest like an invisible weight. Her steps were careful, measured, as if the streets themselves had become a stage of danger.

The usual city noises—the hum of passing cars, the screech of brakes, distant voices—felt like signals, coded warnings. Every car that slowed near her seemed to be tracking her. Every darkened window hid a watchful eye. Even silence, when it fell unexpectedly, was as threatening as any sound.

She was living in a drama now, but a quiet one, invisible yet all-encompassing. No more open scenes, no direct confrontations—just an internal terror, fed by his fear. He didn't need to be physically near to destroy her; his imagined presence, lodged deep in her mind, was enough.

Elira would pause occasionally, pretending to check her phone, just to catch her reflection in a store window. She would turn suddenly, scanning over her shoulder for a figure that never appeared—but she always felt it there.

Her heart raced—not from walking, but from the constant anticipation of something terrible.

She understood that fear was changing her. It was stealing her freedom, stripping away normalcy, turning every morning into a battle to get out the door. Yet she kept going outside. To stay inside would be to accept captivity; outside, amid anxiety and noise, there remained a glimmer of hope—that one day, the pursuit would end.

In quiet moments, when she tried to calm herself, the thought never left her: He would come. He would not stop. This terror followed her even into dreams. Sleep offered no refuge—it was a place where he could always appear, a ghost shadowing her.

She began recording every incident: threatening messages, anonymous calls, people who lingered too long on the street, unknown cars that followed. Every detail was a piece of the map she needed to understand to survive.

For the first time, she felt the need to plan her escape carefully. Every step, every destination had to be secret. This was no longer mere fear; it was a survival strategy.At night, when the city lights dimmed, she sat down to make a list:

Call her lawyer for legal help and a divorce.Find a safe place to sleep, where he could not find her.

Contact the embassy for shelter and protection.

Keep everything secret—especially phone calls and messages, because even stray signals could reach him.

She knew that any mistake could be fatal. He was not just angry—he was powerful, wealthy, and unhinged.

Each day outside her control, fear grew—but so did her determination. She would not give in.

Planning the Escape and Strategy

On the third morning after leaving the hospital, she realized fear would not leave on its own. He was watching everywhere… The observer at the window caught her at the worst possible moment. He made a mistake and came too close. Now it was clear. It was time to act.

She picked up her phone and wrote a direct message to her lawyer:

"I cannot stay here any longer. He is coming. Help me. I need protection and a divorce."

She had fled from home to the hospital, then to another safe house. The thought of leaving filled her with fear—but also a strange sense of power. Everything had to be meticulously planned. Bags were packed in silence, with important documents, money, and essentials for several days. Everything else would be left behind.

The lawyer gave initial instructions: File for divorce—even without a marriage certificate—and request an emergency protective order. He warned her that her abuser had power and money; any mistake could be exploited.

She decided to leave home immediately after meeting the lawyer. She mapped a secret route, choosing streets he couldn't monitor. A trusted friend met her temporarily at a hidden location where she could stay undetected. But leaving wasn't just physical—it was strategic. Every movement, every call, every piece of information had to be controlled. She even contacted the U.S. Embassy in Tirana, explaining the situation. Shelter, legal protection, and

emergency assistance were critical.
When she thought about the future, she felt a mixture of fear and resolve. She was no longer a passive victim. Every planned step, every chosen street, brought her closer—bit by bit—to freedom.
Her lawyer and team escorted her from the house discreetly and brought her to the designated safe house coordinated with the embassy.
Temporary Shelter and Protection

The air inside the safe house was warm and calm, a strange contrast to the fear she carried inside. Every step was measured. Everything was packed and secured carefully. The shelter was not just a place to sleep; it was a strategic center where any move by the abuser could be monitored and neutralized.
An older woman in charge greeted her with a gentle but firm smile. "You are safe here," she said, though her eyes betrayed that she knew safety was relative. There was no absolute safe place in a world where he had power and money.
Elira settled into a small room with a simple table and a small window overlooking a quiet courtyard. Every sound from outside heightened her awareness, keeping her alert. She called her lawyer again to confirm her location and temporary plan.
The staff gave clear instructions: Report any unknown message immediately, move carefully when leaving the room, and keep internal information secure. Protection

didn't come just from strong walls, but from disciplined actions.

Her mind, however, still returned to him. He could come at any time—but now she had strategies to minimize risk. Every day spent in this safe place was a small victory. There was no absolute peace—but partial control over her fate was enough to keep moving forward. She sat in a small room, with a simple table and a tiny window overlooking a quiet courtyard. Every sound from outside made her tense, but it also kept her alert. She called her lawyer again, updating him on her secure location and temporary plan.

The shelter staff gave her clear instructions: any unknown message had to be reported immediately, every step taken outside needed to be cautious, and all internal information had to be kept confidential. She understood that protection did not come solely from strong walls, but also from the disciplined management of every action she took.

Meanwhile, her mind kept returning to him. He could come at any time, but now she had strategies to minimize the risk. Each day she spent in this place was a small victory. There was no absolute peace, but there was partial control over her fate.

In the evening, as the city lights… As the city lights faded one by one and silence settled over the streets, she felt a new kind of strength rising within her. The fear had not disappeared; it was still there, reminding her to remain cautious and vigilant. But alongside that fear, there was now a growing courage—the strength to speak out, to expose the truth.

In silence, she embraced that strength. She knew it was more powerful than any wall or surveillance camera.
"Madness does not come suddenly; it is the long silence of pain that no one ever heard."
"When a person loses touch with reality, they no longer see people—they see scenes from their own mind."
The Meeting with the Lawyer
The lawyer's office was small but warm. The books neatly arranged on tall shelves gave the room a sense of seriousness and authority. She sat across from his desk, feeling a slight tremor in her hands.
The lawyer reviewed the documents she had brought. After a moment, he looked up at her with calm but determined eyes. He was a serious and formal man, always dressed in a black suit and white shirt.
After a short pause, he spoke.

Lawyer:
"I understand your situation. You are not legally married, but the law still allows you to seek legal protection and request separation."
She sighed softly before responding.
She said quietly:"Hope is a light that never goes out, even when the road ahead is filled with darkness. Some people run to save their bodies; others run to save their souls."
Then she continued, her voice trembling.
She:
"He… he doesn't stop. He follows me. He watches me. I can't stay in that house anymore. I'm afraid he might… he might hurt me."

The lawyer looked directly into her eyes.
Lawyer:
"That is why I asked you to leave the house. Here, you are safe. Don't be afraid."

Then his tone grew more serious.
"This is not ordinary fear. You are facing a real threat to your life. We must immediately file for an emergency protection order."
She interrupted him before he could finish.
She:
"Yes, you're right, lawyer. But this isn't an ordinary case. It's my misfortune that I ever met a man like him. Now I must escape—but also protect myself. He has money, power… and perhaps he has lost the ability to stop. Will the law really work?"
She sighed deeply. A tear formed on her eyelash and slowly rolled down her cheek.
"Life must be accepted as it comes," she added quietly.
The lawyer raised his voice slightly, firm but reassuring.
Lawyer:"It will work—but we must be smart. We will act carefully and strategically. From now on, you must remain discreet in everything you do. I will guide you step by step. We will not allow him to use his power against you."
She nodded slowly.
She:
"What should I do now? Where should I go?"
Then she stood up from the chair as if preparing to leave.
She was tall, elegant, and strikingly beautiful. Her eyes

carried a magnetic charm capable of captivating almost any man—not just Arben. She usually dressed in shades of blue combined with black. Even through the sadness in her eyes, she looked extraordinary.

"A frightening truth is healthier than a sweet lie that destroys you."

"Mad people invent enemies; wise people find them within themselves."

The lawyer had listened carefully to everything she said before answering.

Lawyer:

"First, you will stay in a safe location. I have already arranged temporary shelter documents for you. After that, we will begin the procedures for the protection order and legal separation. Every message or call he sends must be recorded. Do not respond."

She:

"And… if he finds me here?"

Lawyer:

"He won't—if you follow the plan. But you must be careful. Every movement must be controlled."She:

"I'm afraid… but I have to do this. I can't remain passive anymore."

Lawyer:

"That determination is exactly what you need. Every step we take is for your protection. You will be safe—but you must follow the rules."

She took a deep breath. The tension and fear were still there, but something else had begun to grow within her—a

new strength.
This meeting was not just a legal consultation.
It was the beginning of her battle for freedom.

Reflection and Awareness
Still dressed in her black dress and gray coat, she sat beside a small window in the temporary shelter, watching the empty street outside.
The city lights were fading one by one, but the memories would not fade. She remembered every moment of violence, every threatening word, every cold look that had once frozen her with fear.
"How much I endured…" she thought.
"How long I allowed his fear to control me."
But now she was far away, hidden—and for the first time she felt she might actually have control over her own life.
Quietly she looked out at the street, the buildings, the few passing people. Then she whispered to herself:
"I am no longer a victim. I will not let fear destroy me. I will fight. I will survive."
Not every story ends with love.
Some end with lessons—lessons about loss, pain, and the discovery of a new kind of love.
"Endings are not punishments—they are doors through which another life begins."
A powerful feeling took hold of her. It wasn't only fear that kept her awake—it was the determination growing inside her.
Every day she spent in that hidden place was a small victory. She was learning to take control of her life—her

body, her mind, and the future she had the right to create.
She realized that freedom does not come only from physical escape. It also comes from the inner strength to decide.
Now fear was no longer only her enemy.
It had become a warning, teaching her to stay alert, careful, and strong.
And as night fell and silence covered the city, she felt a small but powerful hope rising within her.
This was her fight.
And she would not lose it.

Late that night she left the lawyer's secret location. Several police officers escorted her safely to a protected shelter.

She often cursed that night—the night of the interview with the doctor on RTSH. Yet she defended herself with another thought: that man had seemed different then. Handsome, like a top model, intelligent. Any woman might have fallen in love with him.
She told herself this almost as a way of protecting herself from self-blame.
Then silence fell again.
Standing at the gate of the shelter, she felt a shiver run through her entire body. Fear and uncertainty gripped her thoughts.
Will I really be safe here?
Every step toward the entrance felt like stepping into an unknown world—yet also toward possible salvation.
She had once been used to reporting news, moving through the city, chasing stories wherever they happened.

Now those dreams were over.
Reality was knocking at her door.
She lifted her head and noticed a woman watching her with curiosity and attention. It was one of the shelter's staff members.
A woman in a simple uniform stood calmly at the door.
The woman:
"Welcome. You don't need to be afraid here. You are safe."
She:
"Hello, ma'am… are you well?" she asked politely. Then, before waiting for an answer, she continued:
"Yes… I'm afraid. He doesn't stop. I don't know how long I'll be safe."
The woman:
"He cannot come here. No one will find you. We will help you stay hidden and protected. You are not alone."
The American representative pulled out a small notebook and began writing. Then he looked up and started the conversation.

"Now let's talk about the plan," he said seriously.

"We have a strategy that works in three steps:

A protection order,

Legal divorce proceedings,

Coordinated shelter and security."

Then the lawyer spoke.

“Any mistake could be exploited by the aggressor,” he said firmly.

He finished his sentence and turned his gaze toward the American representative from the embassy, who was clearly taking the situation very seriously.

The man looked directly at Elira with a strict, authoritative expression. He cleared his throat, straightened his jacket, and stood up.

“Ma’am, you are safe,” he said. “Our security team will protect you.”

“There will be discreet patrols and confidential shelter arrangements. Every movement must be coordinated with us and with your lawyer. He will have no opportunity to track you.”

Elira remained silent for a moment. Fear still gripped her.

“What happens… if he somehow finds a trace of my location?” she asked quietly.

Her voice broke, and tears began to fall from fear and exhaustion. She wiped them away with a white tissue and

sat down again.

The lawyer and the American representative exchanged a glance.

The lawyer spoke first.

“No trace will exist,” he said calmly. “But we must follow every rule carefully. Every phone call, every message, and any information shared with others must be strictly controlled.”

Elira nodded in understanding.

The American representative looked at her with sympathy.

“I am a representative of the Embassy,” he said. “I promise you that we will help you wherever necessary. We do not take matters like this lightly.”

“You will move only with our coordination, and any emergency will be handled immediately. You are under diplomatic protection.”

She sat quietly and took a deep breath.

Part of her felt relieved. Another part of her was still trembling with fear.

But for the first time, she felt something new: a complete strategy—a plan that might save her life.

The Secret Departure
Preparation and Leaving the Shelter

She woke early in the morning while the city was still asleep.

The dim lights of the shelter room created a peaceful atmosphere, but her body remained tense. Every step had to be calculated. Every trace of her movements had to remain hidden.

Deep inside, she believed that she would only feel completely safe once she was outside Albania.

She was still in her pajamas when someone knocked on the door.

Elira jumped slightly in fear, but the voice of the shelter worker calmed her.

“Are you ready?” the woman asked from outside the door. “Don’t be afraid, ma’am. Everything has been carefully planned. We are taking you to another location—somewhere with no cameras and where no one knows you.”

“Get ready. In half an hour someone will come to pick

you up. Don't overthink things now. You're under our protection. You are safe."

"And remember," the woman added softly, "America is involved in your case, Ms. Journalist."

Elira nodded.

"Yes… thank you," she said quietly. "I'm afraid, but I can't stay passive anymore. He could come at any moment."

"Don't worry," the shelter worker replied. "We'll be with you every step of the way. Your phone will be secured against tracking or surveillance. Any unknown message will be deleted without being opened until we verify it."

Elira took a deep breath.

The bags she had prepared earlier were ready: legal documents, money, and a few essential items for several days. Everything else would remain behind.

The Secret Movement

They left in an unmarked car, moving through narrow, unfamiliar streets.

The driver changed directions frequently—turning suddenly into side alleys, stopping briefly, then continuing

again—as if erasing the invisible trail of their presence.

Every movement was calculated to avoid surveillance.

Elira sat silently in the back seat, leaning slightly forward, watching everything around her with tense, alert eyes.

Streetlights slid across the car window like shadows racing past.

Every small sound—a sudden brake, a nearby engine starting, a distant horn—made her shiver.

Her heart was pounding, but she tried to breathe slowly, hiding the panic tightening in her chest.

Inside her mind she whispered:

"Every step is a test. But I can't turn back."

For several minutes, silence filled the car.

Only the sound of tires on asphalt and the beating of her heart seemed louder than the engine.

Then, without warning, the car slowed down and stopped in a hidden place far from the lights and noise of the city.

Another man was waiting there—a calm-faced man with vigilant eyes responsible for security and movement

coordination.

He looked around carefully, as if checking the safety of the area one more time before speaking.

“Welcome,” he said quietly but firmly. “This place is safe for now. You will stay here until we verify that no trace remains and organize the next move.”

Elira stepped out of the car carefully.

Her hands were still trembling slightly as she picked up her bags. She wiped the nervous sweat from her forehead and adjusted the strands of hair that had fallen across her face, as if clinging to a small gesture of normal life.

Then she raised her head and said softly:

“Thank you… I don’t know what I would have done without your help.”

Without waiting for a response, she entered the new shelter.

The door closed behind her with a quiet click.

For the first time in a long time, she felt a fragile sense of calm—not because the fear had disappeared, but because, at least for that night, she had escaped.

Coordination with the Lawyer and the Embassy

Once she settled in, she received a phone call from her lawyer.

"Everything is going according to plan," he said. "The protection order is ready, and the Embassy has been informed of your location. There will be discreet patrols, and any threat will be reported immediately."

Elira listened silently.

Finally she said:

"I'm afraid… Even stepping outside the door feels dangerous."

"That's normal," the lawyer replied. "But now you have a strategy. You're not alone anymore. Every decision you make will be protected."

A few moments later her phone vibrated again—this time with a message from the Embassy.

She opened it.

Her eyes brightened slightly as she read the consul's words:

"You are under full protection. Any potential threat will be

managed immediately. Do not leave your location without coordination with us or your lawyer."

She took a deep breath.

The fear had not disappeared, but now she had a network of protection surrounding her.

It was another step toward her freedom.

Arben Learns About Elira's Escape

Arben heard the news through his own sources.

Elira was planning to leave for the United States. She had received help from the Embassy and from her lawyer. His heart began beating wildly, and his thoughts slipped between obsession and paranoia.
Arben was no longer the calm man he had once appeared to be after therapy. Treatment had helped him for a while—but not completely.
Many signs of his instability and his extreme need for control still appeared in his actions.
He felt betrayed.
And completely lost.
She felt comforted by the woman's words.
She said softly:
"Thank you… I don't know what I would have done without your help." The woman escorted her into a small

room with soft lighting and a calm atmosphere. Another woman was already there—someone who had once endured violence herself and now helped support others going through the same ordeal.
The other woman said gently:
"I've been where you are. I know how fear keeps you awake all night. But you'll be safe here. You'll learn to take control of your life again."
She sat down in a chair, feeling every tremor in her body. Every word she heard offered a small sense of comfort, but the fear did not disappear completely. Every sound outside the room, every nearby step, made her shiver.
Yet the feeling of support—and the realization that she was no longer alone—slowly began to form a new inner strength.
She had read scenes like this only in novels before and had never given them much thought. She had never imagined that one day she herself would be living through such a moment.

For a moment she even thought about Arben's strange behavior and imitated his tone in her mind. She laughed briefly, almost bitterly, and then fell into deep thought. How could something like this really happen?
She whispered to herself:
"I may feel fear… but I'm not alone anymore. I won't let him control me. I will fight—and I will survive."
She realized that this was a huge step toward her freedom—a place where she could begin rebuilding her

life, even though fear would always remain somewhere nearby.

The Intervention of the American Embassy

Her phone trembled in her hand.

The number of the American Embassy in Tirana, which the lawyer had given her, appeared on the screen. She took a deep breath, feeling fear move through every cell in her body—but also a small spark of hope that this call could change everything.

Finally, she answered.

Through the uncertainty and anxiety, she heard a calm voice on the line.The Consul's Voice (on the phone):

"This is the American Embassy. Hello. Are you safe right now? We're calling to find a way to assist you."

He paused for a moment and asked a few questions.

Her voice trembled as she replied.

She said:

"My name is Elira Dosti. I'm a journalist with RTSH. I'm in danger. My husband—a powerful and wealthy man—has been following me, threatening me, and abusing me. I need protection and a safe place to stay. I couldn't remain in my house any longer."

The Consul replied calmly:

"I understand the seriousness of your situation. Please don't worry, ma'am. We take your case very seriously. We can provide emergency shelter and legal support. We will coordinate with local authorities to ensure your safety. Could you tell us your current location?"

"Yes," she said quickly. "I have a lawyer, and he has helped me a lot. He brought me here."
"Very good," the consul replied.
Her voice still shaking with anxiety, Elira explained where she was.
She added:
"Yes… I'm in a shelter for abused women on the outskirts of Tirana. I want to stay here, but I'm afraid he might find me."
"I'm sending you the location now, Mr. Consul," she said.
"All right," he replied. "We will take the necessary steps."

Then he added reassuringly:The Consul:
"That fear is understandable. We will provide additional support and maintain strict confidentiality. No one will know your location. You will be under international protection, and any threat will be reported immediately."

She took a deep breath. The tension and fear had not disappeared, but for the first time she felt a strong support system—a hand reaching out to protect her.
When the call ended, the room fell silent again.
She whispered to herself:
"I'm not alone anymore. He can't find me. I have protection. But I must stay alert. The story isn't over—and I won't give up."
The faint light coming through the shelter's window felt like the beginning of something new.

One day she would live without fear. But until then, every step would be a battle—and every decision a step toward freedom.

Planning for Safety

She sat at the small table in the temporary shelter with the lawyer's documents spread out before her.Her phone trembled in her hand.

Part of her feared that every move she made could be discovered. But another part felt a determination she had not felt in weeks.

Her thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the lawyer calling.

Lawyer:

"We have a plan. We will request an emergency protection order and begin legal separation procedures, even though you don't have a marriage certificate. But that alone is not enough."

She responded quietly.

She:

"He has power and money."

"Don't worry, ma'am," the lawyer replied. "I understand that you're frightened. Every move from now on will be secret and coordinated."

"Do you agree with this plan?"

She:

"Yes. I only want to be safe. I can't remain passive anymore."

Lawyer:

"We will cooperate with the American Embassy in Tirana.

They can offer immediate protection and a confidential shelter. You will be protected—but you must follow every instruction we give you."
After ten minutes of discussion, he ended the call.
She took a deep breath and began writing down every possible detail about the aggressor's movements, creating what she called a "risk map."Every street, every route, every step outside had to be strategic.
That man has many employees he pays… and many spies as well, she thought. This will not be easy.
But she calmed herself when she remembered the involvement of the American Embassy.
She replayed the conversation with the consul in her mind again and again.

Yet sometimes the memory of the doctor's threatening words still returned, filling her with anxiety.
To calm herself, she repeated the consul's words in her mind:
The Consul had said:
"We have received your request. You will be placed in a confidential shelter, and any threat from the aggressor will be monitored. Cooperation with your lawyer is essential for every legal step. Do not act alone—always coordinate with him."
Remembering those words brought her a small sense of relief.
The fear had not disappeared—but now she felt the presence of a protective hand helping her remain safe.

The Joint Meeting: Lawyer and Embassy
Several days later, the lawyer and a representative from the American Embassy came to the shelter near Student City in Tirana to discuss their strategy.
The atmosphere was serious. The tension of being pursued seemed present in every sentence spoken.

The lawyer spoke first.
He looked directly into Elira's eyes and asked how she had been treated at the shelter, whether she had any concerns with the staff, and whether she felt safe there.
He reassured her again that the location offered strong protection and that she should not be afraid.
She smiled slightly. She still looked worried—but determined.
Then he said firmly:
Please sit down, ma'am, and listen carefully."She remained silent for a moment before sitting in the chair across from him.

And then she noticed that the embassy representative was also watching her closely, ready to speak. He organized everything: all his workers and contacts in the city received clear orders. Every street, every neighborhood, every place Elira could go had to be surveilled. He followed her like a ship in high waves, leaving nothing to chance.
Fear and coordination of emergency measures
At the safe house, Elira received a call from her lawyer.
Lawyer: "He's learned about your departure. He's

organizing everything to stop you. You must remain hidden and not go out without coordination."
Elira, worried, her voice soft: "I know… I'm afraid he won't stop. He could do anything. Only you and the U.S. government can stop him. Those in power here… he has them completely."
Lawyer: "Yes. But now you are under the Embassy's full protection. Any possible threat will be immediately reported to the police. He cannot come near you. You are protected by the Marines, ma'am. Don't underestimate them."
Elira took a deep breath, feeling the tension coursing through every cell of her body, but also a sense of relief settling in her mind and body. She set down the glass of water on the table and appreciated the thought: she had legal and diplomatic protection keeping her safe.

Citizens report Arbeni and police intervention
When Arbeni approached the city, several citizens and neighbors who had witnessed his violent and threatening behavior immediately contacted the police.
Police officer: "I called the lawyer, who had left a contact number with the station. We've received information that a man is stalking and threatening a woman. He is Arbeni, known for violence and violations."
According to patrol reports, it was indeed Arbeni.
Lawyer (on the phone): "Good. The plan is in motion. This is the time to act. He will be stopped for another violation. And do not think about Elira. Let the police intervene. This

action will ensure he can no longer target our client."
Police officer: "Understood, chief. I'm coordinating with the criminal division, and we're acting now."
The police arrested Arbeni, removing him from the city and implementing immediate security measures. He resisted and shouted, but there was no escape. He was taken to a police station in Elbasan, far from Elira. From a distance, his voice carried across the air, a kilometer away.
Arbeni (shouting): "I won't allow it! I'll stop her! I'm coming for her!"
Police officer: "Not a step further. You are under arrest. Any threat you made toward the woman is a serious crime."
He fell silent but began shouting again, until the officer warned: "If you continue, a special unit will handle you, sir. Stay silent and await the prosecutor's orders."
Relief and security for Elira
At the safe house, Elira received the news: Arbeni had been arrested, and the police had taken strict measures to prevent any contact.
Elira (thinking): "He's far away… but the fear hasn't completely gone. Now, though, I can breathe a little easier. I'm no longer alone, and I won't let him control me."
She then received another call from the Embassy:
Consul: "Hello, ma'am! The gentleman has been arrested. You are protected. Any emergency measure will be available to you. There's no immediate danger."
A small relief filled the room, but the hidden tension remained. Elira knew her freedom was safe for now, but the story was not yet over.

Flight toward freedom: planning the departure
At the safe house, Elira sat with her lawyer and the Embassy representative to finalize the departure plan. The table was covered with documents, hidden tickets, and lists of potential itineraries.Lawyer: "This is the plan to leave for the U.S. We will use hidden routes and discreet transport. No one will know your itinerary."

Elira: "I'm afraid one mistake could ruin the whole plan."

Embassy representative: "That's normal. But every step is controlled.The police are aware of all possible actions by Arbeni. Discreet patrolling and legal protection will be active until you board the plane."Elira: "Yes… we need to do this quickly. I can't stay passive any longer."
Lawyer: "We will proceed step by step. Every move will be coordinated with us. You must follow every instruction."
Even the U.S. Marines will escort you from a distance. No one can reach you. You are as protected as a president," he added, finally smiling.
Elira remained in the safe house office, holding the documents and plane tickets that represented freedom—away from here. Her heart raced, but something inside pushed her to act:
Elira: "I can't stay silent anymore. He must be stopped. I won't let anyone else suffer because of him. Don't let that man harm anyone else. Make it public that he's dangerous."
Lawyer: "You're right. We will initiate criminal proceedings. We'll call the police and submit all evidence we have. Any

threat or stalking of a woman is criminal."
Elira: "Yes… we have to do it. I can't stay passive. I'll report him. He's a ticking time bomb. Any other woman could become his victim."
The district captain's call
Tirana police immediately got involved. A single call from the lawyer set the official mechanism in motion. The district captain was summoned urgently and arrived at the safe house to personally take Elira's report. His presence brought a sense of seriousness and order, as if, for the first time, her fear was taking legal form.

He entered the room with calm, determined steps. Uniform neat, face composed, eyes attentive. He introduced himself briefly and sat across from her, taking out a notepad.
Captain: "I'm glad I found you. I've heard about your situation. Tell us every detail that can help us act."
Elira took a deep breath. Her hands were cold, but her voice was clear. For the first time, she spoke not as a victim of fear, but as a witness to the truth.Elira: "He's stalking me. Monitoring me. He's threatened me directly and indirectly. He has power and money and thinks that makes him untouchable. But everything is documented: calls, messages, schedules, movements… every trace of him. I have it all."
She pulled out her phone and a thin folder from her bag. The evidence was there, carefully organized, as if she herself had built a protective wall, page by page.
The captain glanced at the materials and nodded slightly.

Captain: "Very good. All evidence will be officially recorded, and we will open criminal proceedings immediately. After the report, you are legally protected. No one can touch you during this process."

His words were not empty promises; they were firm statements backed by law. For the first time in a long while, Elira felt something close to security. She smiled slightly—a fragile but sincere smile. Then she began to report Arbeni, without unnecessary emotion, without revenge in her voice. Only facts. Only the truth. Their past love had no place here; only the need for justice remained.

Together with the oversight team and escorted by police, she headed to the station. Every step toward the official building was a step away from the darkness. There, in the cold offices lit by neon lights, everything became official: statements, signatures, reports.

When she emerged, Elira was not yet free—but she was protected. And for the first time, fear no longer guided her path.

Scene at the police station

At the station, Elira sat across from a large metal table, cold to the touch, where the judicial police officers and her lawyer were already present. The harsh neon light fell directly on the documents, making the letters seem even heavier. On the surrounding walls, security monitors displayed footage from hidden cameras: Arbeni's movements, suspicious stops, threatening messages, repeated schedules—every detail of her fear had been turned into evidence.

The judicial police officer spoke in a calm but firm voice,

laying out a thick dossier in front of her.
"Every action by Arbeni has been documented. Audio recordings, video footage, and witness statements all match. Criminal proceedings for stalking, threats, and endangerment of life will begin. The court will issue a restraining order to keep him away from you."
He pushed the documents toward her and added:
"Please, sign here—on every page. And at the end: full name and signature."
Elira took the pen. Her hand trembled slightly—not from fear of the moment, but from the weight of everything being closed with a signature. She lifted her eyes.

"I'm afraid he might react," she said softly. "I don't know if he'll realize he's lost control."
The district captain, standing a little way off, immediately intervened. His voice was strong, confident.
"This is the law," he said. "You are protected. Any further threat will be punished. We are here to defend you, and the legal process will continue to the end."
Her lawyer leaned slightly toward her, softer in tone but just as resolute.
"Now you have full legal protection. He cannot act against you without severe legal consequences. Any violation of the order will only worsen his position."
The captain added, looking her directly in the eye:
"All the harm that man has caused you, he will answer for legally."
Elira lowered her eyes and began signing page after page.

Each signature was a separation—from fear, from silence, from the guilt she had kept to herself. When she reached the last page, she wrote her full name with firmer pressure than she expected.

When finished, she left the pen on the table and took a deep breath. A slow but real sense of relief coursed through her body. Fear had not vanished completely—but now she was no longer alone.
Relief and determination
Elira sat back in the chair and drew a deep breath. For the first time, she felt a strong sense of security:
Elira (thinking): "He can't stalk me anymore. The law is on my side. But the story isn't over yet. I have to stay alert and protect my freedom."
"No freedom, no life. I'm foolish," she murmured to herself. "It's pointless to believe in love at first sight. All loves are lies." She would no longer love anyone; she had lost all feeling of love.
She left calmly, escorted by the ready police unit. The story of their love was reaching its end. She walked quickly and stopped to stay in the safe house room, reviewing the collected documents. Countless calls, threatening messages, and surveillance traces had been carefully logged and documented. Her heart raced, but something inside urged her to act.Elira: "I can't stay silent anymore… He must be stopped. I cannot allow anyone else to suffer because of him."

Lawyer: "You're right. After reporting him, we will begin criminal proceedings immediately. Every piece of evidence you've collected will be used against him. Every threat and act of stalking is a serious crime."
We handed all evidence and facts to the judicial officers.

Elira: "I'm afraid… I don't know if he can still do something to me."
Lawyer: "Now is the time. You are a weapon against him. The law is with you, and you won't let him control your life anymore."
Elira took a deep breath and began organizing the documents chronologically: every call, message, and recorded incident, all material evidence to be handed over to the police and Embassy. She kept one copy for herself. Maybe I'll publish it one day, she thought.
Embassy support
Coordination with the U.S. Embassy was constant and structured. Every step, location, and schedule of Elira's went through a double security filter. Albanian police and diplomatic representatives worked quietly, away from public eyes, ensuring that no detail was left to chance.
An Embassy representative met personally with Elira and police leadership. The meeting was held in a secure, quiet environment, with a seriousness that made clear the situation was being treated at the highest level. Every potential scenario was analyzed: movements, contacts, risks, and immediate response options.
The consul spoke calmly, almost parentally, as if wanting to remove fear not just with words but with conviction.

"You are protected," he said. "Any possible threat will be handled immediately. Covert patrols are active, and every movement is monitored in real time. You are not alone, and you are no longer unprotected."

His words were more than comfort. Behind them was a whole security mechanism: discreet surveillance, coded communication, rapid intervention if danger arose. Elira felt it—not as pressure, but as an invisible shield finally rising around her.

She spoke slowly, her voice still carrying traces of fear but also a glimmer of hope:

"I'm afraid," she said. "But for the first time, I feel I'm not alone. I'm not unprotected."Her lawyer immediately reinforced the message with precise legal language:"Now you have full protection," he said. "There can be no more stalking or threats without severe consequences. And any possible action is ready to be implemented instantly."

Elira lowered her eyes for a moment, taking a deep breath. Fear had not completely vanished—it never leaves so easily—but now it no longer ruled her. For the first time in a long while, Elira felt she had allies, institutions, people standing beside her not out of mercy, but out of justice. And that changed everything. Arbeni's Breakdown and Elira's Relief

Arbeni was detained at the police station under immediate security measures. Initially, it was for harassing and threatening another person, but soon an absolute restraining order was issued against him—barring any contact with Elira. The order was clear, firm, and irreversible.

From the station's corridors, his screams echoed. Arbeni's voice, once calm and rational, was now fractured by madness and loss of control.

"I won't allow it!" he yelled. "I'll stop her at any cost! She betrayed me! She's unfaithful! Now that I've fallen in… she's gone!"

His words came in fragmented bursts, illogical, as though thoughts collided with one another. He no longer spoke to reality but to his twisted version of truth—a world where he was the victim, and Elira was suffering regardless of law, morality, or her innocence.

A police officer approached him, speaking in a sharp, unwavering voice:

You are under arrest. Any threat against the woman will be prosecuted. There is no way out for you."

The words hit like a door slamming shut. For the first time, Arbeni had no control over anyone—neither her, the situation, nor his own life.

Elira's Relief

Meanwhile, Elira had been in the safe house for days. Time dragged, each minute stretching endlessly. She paced the room, paused by the window, listening to noises that no longer frightened her but kept her heart vigilant.

When the news finally came, she sank into a chair slowly. She drew a deep breath, as if for the first time her lungs were truly full. Tears fell quietly—not from pain, but from relief.

In a silent monologue with herself, she said:

"God willing, I'm safe. He can't follow me anymore. The law is on my side. The story isn't over, but I am no longer a victim. I will protect my life."
Her words were more than thoughts—they were an inner oath. A boundary permanently drawn between the past and what was to come.
Arbeni's Madness
Hallucinations and Obsessions
After his arrest and the start of criminal proceedings, Arbeni increasingly lost touch with reality. Whether in the isolation room at the station or later in the psychiatric hospital, his behavior became unstable and dangerous.

He often spoke to an imaginary figure he called "Qirlli"—a companion fabricated from his obsessions. The voice egged him on, justified him, feeding the idea that he was right. He argued with it, laughed suddenly, then exploded in anger as if facing invisible enemies.
Visual hallucinations intensified. Lights in the room became watchful eyes. Shadows on the walls turned into people following him, figures approaching silently. Sometimes he would jump up, shouting that someone had come to get him.
Doctors recorded every detail. His file filled not only with criminal charges but also with clear evidence of severe mental collapse—a madness fueled by obsession, loss, and refusal to accept reality.
As Arbeni sank deeper into the darkness of his mind, Elira, far away, slowly began to rise. Two paths that had once

crossed in love now diverged: one toward destruction, the other toward survival and life.

He spoke obsessively to himself, voicing fears and fixations about Elira and others. Everyone else stopped and listened silently.

Arbeni (speaking to Qirlli):

"You know… they don't understand. She will come back… I have to stop her… They won't allow it, but I will."

Qirlli (imaginary, in his mind):

"What are we doing? She's far away… You're losing control."

Arbeni struck the walls, screamed, and felt the crushing pressure of paranoid thoughts. Every step seemed to drive him deeper into madness. He would cry, then laugh. His paranoia had become inescapable.

Hospitalization and Treatment

He was sent to the hospital for immediate treatment. Doctors diagnosed severe psychopathy, with symptoms of paranoia and hallucinations.

They arranged rapid hospitalization and prepared prescriptions to stabilize his condition. Psychiatrists immediately gathered in his room for a final consultation.

Doctor: "He has lost touch with reality. We will prescribe medication to reduce obsessive symptoms and hallucinations. Every treatment must be closely monitored."

Nurse: "He often attacks when he doesn't understand reality. We must be careful and record every action."

Arbeni experienced long periods of calm interrupted by

violent psychological episodes. His obsessions over Elira and control of everything he had lost made him oblivious to his surroundings.

He was mentally ill. His fear of losing freedom became a pathological obsession, leading to attacks on others. He would cry and curse anyone near him. The possibility of visits was discussed—but only with special permission, the doctors said, as it could worsen his condition further.

Short Releases and Continuing Treatment

After a few days, he showed slight improvement and could be released for short periods according to hospital protocol. But every outing triggered paranoia and internal tension.

He felt he had lost everything and hated the citizens walking past, seeing them as continuous threats. His speech was disorganized, often mentioning Elira, Qirlli, and people he wanted to control.

Medical treatment aimed to stabilize him, including antipsychotic medication, sedatives, and intensive psychotherapy. At the last evaluation, there was some improvement, but careful observation remained essential.

Doctor: "The prescriptions are partially effective. He is stable for now but requires continuous monitoring."

He was no longer aggressive, but recovery was still far off. His paranoia continued to converse with itself and with shadows.

Arbeni spoke to the shadows, loudly:

"They don't understand… Nobody understands… But I will follow… I won't lose her… I will take her again."

Return of Obsession and Psychological Isolation

His obsession with Elira did not end with his arrest; it was

etched permanently into his mind. The control he once had over others, situations, and even his own life now existed only as an illusion in a mind decaying day by day.

Repeated hospitalizations, intensive therapy, and constant consultations with neurologists and psychologists were undertaken to prevent any further danger Further Descent: Arbeni's Loss of RealityArbeni had already lost something essential: his connection to reality. He no longer controlled his own thoughts. Memories, fantasies, and hallucinations blended without boundaries, creating an inner world where Elira still existed—not as a free person, but as a possessed figure, a symbol of lost power. In that world, he still believed he was right, that the truth belonged solely to him.

His dialogue with the imaginary Qirlli continued without pause. Qirlli was no longer just a figment of imagination; he had become the shattered mirror of Arbeni's consciousness, a voice that both challenged and deceived him. Through this dialogue, Arbeni's identity slowly disintegrated, like a mirror broken into hundreds of pieces.

Psychopathy and paranoia intensified. Every glance from the doctors felt like a threat. Every movement by the nurses seemed like a trap. They monitored him relentlessly—not only for the safety of others but for him as well, because he had become a danger to himself.

One morning, before dawn, he lost himself again. He stood in the middle of the white room, speaking to a man no one else could see. His voice rose and fell as if conducting an internal trial. He shouted—and answered himself:

"I… I'm not crazy," he said loudly, clutching his head.
"They don't understand… She will come back… And I will stop her… Will she escape again? No. Remember that."
Qirlli responded with a low, piercing voice, seemingly coming from the shadows along the wall:
"It's impossible… Everything is falling apart."
Arbeni turned sharply, staring at an empty corner.
"Don't stay there!" he yelled. "I know you're there. Don't hide behind the shadow."
Qirlli's voice came again, calm, almost gentle:
"I am not the shadow, Arbeni. You are the one hiding."The words hit him hard. For a moment, he was silent, eyes filled with confusion, as if reality were trying to break through. But the moment passed quickly. He sat slowly on the bed, murmuring incomprehensible words, while the doctors documented yet another episode of total mental loss.
His isolation was no longer physical—it was psychological, irreversible. A prison without walls, where the mind was both executioner and victim.

As Arbeni sank deeper into this inner darkness, the world outside continued without him. And Elira, far away, was slowly building a life where his name was becoming a powerless memory.
Dialogues of Madness
Arbeni (to the invisible phantom):
"Lies! You came to take me. They all come for this."
Qirlli:

"No one is taking anything from you. You lost everything yourself."
Arbeni (yelling):
"Shut up! Don't tell me that! Freedom is not yours to take!"
Qirlli (calmly):
"Your freedom is your fear. That's why you see me."
Arbeni (trembling):
"Then… why do you hate me?"
Qirlli:
"I don't hate you. You hate the world that no longer understands you."

Arbeni fell silent, speaking only through his breathing.
Diagnosis and Schizoaffective DisorderThe doctors diagnosed him with a severe, incurable condition. They were saddened—he had been a respected colleague, one of the best in circulation—but fate had been cruel. They wrote the final prescription, recording the patient's name and condition: Schizoaffective Disorder.Legal Protection and Elira's Second Report
Elira, supported by her attorney, returned to the Regional Judicial Police to file a second complaint against Arbeni. She had gathered countless new pieces of evidence: threatening messages, recorded calls, witness statements from neighbors, and testimony from shelter staff.Elira: "I'm afraid… Even though he's dangerous and has power. I cannot stay in the city unprotected."
Police Officer: "Everything will be documented. After your second report, the final procedures for his arrest will begin immediately. You will have full protection until departure."

Attorney (smiling): "You're fortunate to be legally married."
Elira: "Yes! God saved me from this. I had a bad premonition—so I acted. I've prepared all the documents."
Attorney: "Good. Now you have nothing to fear."
To ensure her safety, they filed the second complaint with the local precinct near the shelter.
Attorney: "We'll make sure no step you take breaks the law. I don't see any reason to wait. Let this man be arrested." He adjusted his blue jacket, repeating firmly: "It's time to act immediately."
Police Support and Protective Measures
The regional police implemented immediate and detailed measures to guarantee Elira's protection. A covert patrol shadowed her every move, invisible to all. Every route passed through a clear, secure, and controlled plan.
The safe path to her destination was carefully mapped: alternative roads, monitored high-risk areas, and continuous coordination with the shelter.
The Regional Captain spoke calmly but firmly:
"You will never be alone. Any possible threat will be addressed immediately. No one may approach you. We are here to protect you until the end."
Elira placed her hands on the table, speaking in a controlled voice filled with relief:
"Thank you… It feels unbelievable to feel safe after all this."
After so many days of fear, this sense of security was precious and real. For the first time, she felt her life was no longer dependent on invisible shadows and hidden threats.

Arbeni's Arrest

Meanwhile, the police prepared Arbeni's criminal file meticulously. Even though he was hospitalized in a psychiatric facility, no one imagined the case would end there. The prosecutor decided the case would go to court—law had to act regardless of his mental state.

Arbeni remained unpredictable. One moment calm, almost remorseful; the next, wild, threatening, and uncontrollable.

Relentless Danger

This sudden shift made him dangerous not only to Elira but also to himself and anyone around him.

The doctors warned that this fracture in his personality could end in tragedy—even the loss of life.At times, he spoke in a low, almost repentant voice; moments later, he would erupt with screams and curses:

"You will pay! You miserable fools! I will destroy you with my red shadows!"His words were not mere threats—they were the signs of a mind fracturing apart. The commissioner could not afford to waste time. He signed the decision to bring the case to court, convinced that only the law could stop Arbeni before his darkness claimed another life.

Medical Consultations

Following the request for arrest and transfer to the prison hospital, a full psychological and psychiatric evaluation was ordered. Doctors needed to assess his mental state, determine the level of risk, and recommend measures to prevent further stalking or violence.

The consultations included intensive testing, long interviews, and continuous observation of his behavior.

Every aspect of him—from dialogues with the imaginary Qirlli to sudden outbursts of rage—was meticulously documented and analyzed.The goal was clear: protect his health, but above all, safeguard Elira's life and that of any citizen who might come into contact with him. A close coordination between police, hospital staff, and the court ensured that his madness would not translate into direct danger.

"Let's see if Arbeni should face criminal trial or receive psychiatric treatment," said the prosecutor. "These decisions must be approved by the court. I will present the reality as it is," he added.

Legal psychiatrists arrived immediately at Police Station No. 1. They found him in a pitiful state, screaming and agitated. His strength was depleted forever. They wasted no time and recorded in the legal report: Paranoia, hallucinations, and obsessive behavior.

He displayed violent episodes during the interviews. The consultation included a recommendation for mandatory hospitalization to prevent any risk to others.

Psychiatrist: "He has lost contact with reality. Compulsory psychiatric treatment is necessary to prevent danger to himself and others."

"He will never be normal again. That's his story," the doctors said, with deep regret for their once-famous colleague.

Attorney to Elira: "This ensures he can no longer stalk or threaten you. Your protection is guaranteed."

Final Decision: Protection and Treatment

Elira's safety: She would be protected by police until her departure to a secure destination outside Albania.
Attorney: "Think of the U.S. The embassy issued your visa. So be ready to leave…"
Arbeni's fate: He would be sent to a psychiatric hospital for compulsory treatment, removed from the city, ensuring public safety. Legal and medical procedures worked together to secure an immediate and safe solution.

Regional Captain: "Everything is under control. You will have protection until departure, and he cannot approach you."
Elira: "It's unbelievable… I feel a relief I've never felt before."
Attorney: "This is only the beginning. Your freedom is protected, and every step ahead will be under full legal and security protection."
The Journey to Freedom: Preparing to Leave
Elira woke early. Her luggage was minimal, but every item had a purpose—documents, passport, and a few personal items reminding her of home. A covert police patrol waited outside to ensure her departure.Elira (to herself):
"It's the first time I feel I'm not alone… every step I take is protected. But the fear won't leave me… I am terrified to my core. That man terrorized me so badly."
Attorney (holding her hand):
"Everything is under control. The patrol will shadow each step and ensure nothing goes wrong."

Elira: "I'm afraid he might appear… I feel like he's following me at any moment."Attorney: "He cannot approach you. The police and embassy are prepared. You have full protection. Every option has been planned. Stay calm."
Arrival at the Airport and Tension
The airport buzzed with mixed noises: rapid footsteps, metallic announcements, rolling suitcases over cold floors. For Elira, every sound seemed amplified, striking directly at her mind. Her body was present, but her thoughts moved between fear, memories, and fragile hope for escape.Every approaching face seemed suspicious. A man stopping at the counter, a woman casting a quick glance, a passenger speaking quietly on the phone—all briefly resembled his shadow. Her heart pounded, almost painfully.
The covert police presence was there but invisible to the ordinary eye. Officers positioned strategically, vigilant eyes, controlled movements, continuous radio communication. Nothing was left to chance.

Police Officer (over radio, low and firm):
"The area is secure. All entries and exits are controlled. No immediate threat. Proceed according to plan."
Elira gripped the handle of her suitcase tightly. It carried more than clothes—it carried her new life, a fragile but necessary new beginning. She focused on her breathing: one deep breath… then another. Every step toward the gate was a step away from fear, away from the darkness that had gripped her for so long.
Elira (thinking, fragmented):
"Each step takes me further… away from him… away

from all the fear. But why is my heart racing so fast? Am I gaining my freedom… or running from something that marked me forever?"

She paused, tears filling her eyes. Her thoughts returned to the beginning.

"I am not responsible for what happened… before God, I am clean. I loved him. I fell in love at first sight. I have no regrets for loving him."

Her voice trembled, though she spoke only to herself.

"He was sick even before… I did not cause this. I did not destroy him. I loved the Arbeni I knew—the beautiful, intelligent, capable man. But the one who exists now… he is someone else."

Tears ran silently down her cheeks.

"I must save my life…" "That's why I'm leaving."

The attorney stood by her side, calm and focused, his tone carrying a weight of certainty.Attorney: "Stay calm. Soon, it will all be over. Once we board the plane, there's no turning back. Every old chapter ends there."

He looked her straight in the eyes, with a human seriousness that was palpable.

"Your freedom begins now."

Elira cast one last glance around her. No shadows. No threats. Only artificial lights, strangers, and a door opening toward the unknown.

She took a deep breath and took the final step toward the boarding gate—not as a woman fleeing, but as a woman reclaiming herself.

On the Plane and Reflection
The plane lifted into the air. Elira gazed out the window, watching the city shrink below her. As clouds passed by, a sense of liberation began to eclipse her fear.
"I'm free… No more threats… No more violence… Everything is safe… But memories don't leave easily."
Her thoughts wandered to Arbeni, to the police who had protected her, and to the attorney who had left no detail unplanned. Every past episode reminded her of her strength.Elira: "Thank God… It feels incredible. I feel like I'm being reborn.""May God help me," she whispered, looking at the sky. "Thank You," she added once again, silently, to God.
Arrival at the Psychiatric Hospital
"There is no madness without pain. And no pain without a hidden story."

"The truth of the human mind runs deeper than any hospital walls we place around it."
"Hallucinations are not lies; they are truths the mind cannot bear.""They are hidden displays of the soul, fragments of reality the brain refuses because the pain is greater than what we can endure. Every strange vision, every voice or shadow that appears before our eyes, is simply a mirror of what we fear to acknowledge."
Arbeni was brought to the psychiatric hospital by police after his arrest. The blue lights of the corridors and the echo of the nurses' footsteps felt like an unfamiliar battlefield.
Arbeni (talking to himself and his imaginary Qirlli):

"You know… They don't understand… Every step is under my control… They can't stop me!"
Nurse: "He appears extremely agitated and frequently displays sudden aggression. We must act slowly, carefully, and monitor every movement. Any wrong step could trigger an outburst, so we stay close but without provoking him. His safety—and ours—depends on continuous calm and vigilance."

He was placed in an isolated room for full observation, where every move was recorded.

Hallucinations and Obsessions
Arbeni had lost touch with reality. Every step in the hospital room was a battle with himself. He began seeing shadows moving behind walls, unknown faces smiling menacingly or staring fixedly. Imaginary voices never ceased—and Qirlli, his phantasmagorical friend, was always there, speaking, challenging, punishing, and deceiving him all at once.Arbeni (loud, disturbed):
"See… They're betraying me… She is mine… She cannot leave… I won't allow it!"
Qirlli's voice intervened, low, calm, yet merciless:
Qirlli (imaginary):
"It's impossible… Everything is falling apart… You have no control anymore…"
His words were swallowed by the room's ambient noise as fear and despair shook his eyes. He tried to grasp something tangible in the air, but there was nothing—only emptiness and illusion.

Whenever he attempted self-harm, the nurses intervened swiftly, calmly but decisively, restraining him without further trauma.

The room air was heavy with tension and anxiety. Every distant noise made him tremble; every step or knock made him believe someone was approaching to punish him. Nurses knew that only constant vigilance and quick intervention could protect and calm him in this critical moment.Nurse (holding medications):

"We must administer these drugs. This episode is extremely violent, but clearly outlined by his diagnosis. Stabilization is necessary."

Diagnosis and Medical PrescriptionsDoctors conducted a deep psychiatric evaluation, analyzing the patient's history, recent episodes, signs of hallucinations, obsessions, and any mental anomalies that could pose a risk to him or others.Clinical evaluation results:

Paranoid-obsessive disorder: Manifested in continuous fear of danger and repetitive controlling behavior, making every movement a ritual of insecurity.

Delusional disorder, persecutory type: The patient believed he was being followed or threatened by others, regardless of reality.

These two disorders intertwined complexly, making Arbeni highly sensitive to any environmental stimulus. A small noise, a step in the corridor, or an unexpected word could trigger violent outbursts or self-harm.

Treatment plan:

Antipsychotic and sedative medication to stabilize emotions

and perception.Reality-oriented talk therapy to strengthen connection to the real world and reduce hallucinations.
Protective measures in the hospital environment, with continuous monitoring and trained nursing staff for emergencies.
Psychiatrist (lifting his head from notes):
"He is in an advanced state of psychosis. Prescriptions will be antipsychotic and sedative to stabilize his condition and prevent any risk. Every new episode will be monitored in real-time, and we will not allow him to harm himself or others."
Nurses watched carefully, knowing that every minute was critical. Arbeni was immersed in his imaginary world, where every breath, shadow, and voice could become a threat to life.
Nurse: "We will monitor every episode and record his reactions. He needs compulsory hospitalization."Elira left. The divorce never happened, because they were never legally married. It was simply a matter of fate—or a sequence of events beyond predictability.Elira (reflecting):
"Justice is not revenge; it is the liberation of the soul. The law cannot protect your heart from pain, but it gives you the chance to saveyourself. It offers a path you never imagined."

She realized that inner freedom and peace came not from punishing others, but from the ability to accept and act wisely.

It was a painful lesson, bu Sometimes the law can protect, but the heart seeks other actions to find peace.
Arbeni fell asleep under the effect of the numerous sedatives, already drifting into his imaginary world and the inquisition of his own mind—a result of the blows he had once suffered to his head and brain. A difficult childhood lays the foundation for lifelong disorders that follow. He had never known a good life. Life had punished him at the peak of his youthful beauty.
The Red Shadows
The Red Capital, Dr. Arben Kodra
According to the statement of the Police Station Captain, number one, Ditmar Gjergji, he had been arrested for domestic violence against his wife, Elira Dosti; for inciting violence in public; for financing actions that threatened public order; and for violating the Constitution. He had been held for several days at the station, in a small, cold room, with lights that only partially illuminated the space, increasing the tension of the situation.
After a visit by the forensic doctors, it was declared that his mental state was unstable and did not meet the criteria for full criminal responsibility. He was subsequently transferred to Psychiatric Hospital No. 5 in Tirana, where he was receiving necessary medical care under continuous supervision.

Regret over the situation was palpable: everyone at the station understood that a man of international stature, known and influential, was undergoing such a crisis. At the

same time, he was being prosecuted—even by those who had abused him and pushed him toward unconstitutional actions.

Captain: "The situation is serious. This is not only a legal matter but a psychological one. He cannot be left without help, and no one can be allowed to abuse him."

Commissioner: "He is a man of influence. We must be careful, but justice cannot be selective."

Arbeni's emotional state was tense and unstable. His gaze shifted between anger, fear, and confusion. He responded with silence or a low voice when the law and its consequences were discussed. The room he stayed in was cold, reflecting his inner state, filled with anxiety and hidden hallucinations.

Nurses and officers monitored him closely, aware that any reaction could be unpredictable. Every step Arbeni took was recorded, every word he spoke was heard, and every movement was carefully observed. The hospital waiting room was quiet now, but tension lingered in the air. The nurses approached him slowly, cautiously. Dim lights reflected on his face, highlighting fatigue, anger, and inner turmoil.

Nurse: "Dr. Kodra, you will now go to the second floor. This is Psychiatric Hospital No. 5. It will be a safe place where you can receive the necessary help."

Arbeni (low, trembling voice): He resisted the decision, his words barely forming. He gripped the corner of his black shirt as if seeking support within himself to endure what was happening. His eyes shook, his tense face revealed

fear and anger, while his mind struggled to comprehend the consequences of the decision. A heavy silence filled the room, each word he tried to speak seeming like an attempt to grasp a freedom that felt increasingly distant.
Arbeni: "I don't need… I don't need… They don't understand… Everything is against me…"
The Captain and Commissioner watched from outside the room, calm but vigilant. They knew that any movement from Arbeni could be unpredictable.
Captain (quietly to the Commissioner): "Look… he's isolated in his own thoughts. Any reaction could be violent, but we cannot leave him untreated."
Commissioner: "It's true… His psyche is in chaos. We are only doing what is necessary to protect his life and the lives of others."

Arbeni stood slowly, his body trembling, eyes wide with anxiety. The nurses escorted him carefully, holding him securely. He scanned his surroundings with paranoia, believing that anyone approaching was a hidden threat.
The psychiatric hospital room was calm, bathed in soft light and muted colors, a stark contrast to the chaos in Arbeni's mind. The nurses helped him onto the bed, monitoring his vital signs and gently restraining him for safety.
Psychiatrist (observing carefully): "Dr. Kodra, here you will receive proper treatment. Your hallucinations and obsessions will be closely monitored, and there will be 24-hour supervision."
Arbeni (shaken voice): "I… I can't be here… I won't allow

it… They don't understand…"
The nurses explained that the medications would work gradually, emphasizing that there would be no violence—only supervision and treatment. He was laid down slowly, his heart pounding, thoughts swinging between paranoia and loss of control.
The Captain watched from the doorway, feeling a mixture of concern and relief: "It's terrifying to see a man so powerful and dangerous surrender to his own madness."

The room fell into a carefully imposed calm. For Arbeni, however, it was only the beginning of a new battle: a battle with his mind, his obsessions, and his lost control over reality.Psychiatrist: "Dr. Kodra, we are placing you under controlled treatment. The medications will help calm you and restore your mind."
Arbeni (trembling voice): "I don't want… I don't want them to control me… They can't stop me…"
The nurses approached carefully, explaining each step: bed placement, monitoring vital signs, and temporarily securing restraints. He experienced these measures as losses of freedom, one by one.
Qirlli (inside Arbeni's mind):
Within Arbeni's mind, Qirlli, his imaginary friend, began speaking. His voice was calm but filled with unusual seriousness, as if he knew every hidden thought of Arbeni. He spoke as an inner guide, challenging and provoking simultaneously, asking questions Arbeni dared not ask himself. Every word struck buried emotions and fears,

blending reality and imagination dangerously.

Qirlli: "They may take everything, Arbeni… But they can't take your mind… Or can they?"

Arbeni (lying down, trembling): "No, you know nothing. You're just a shadow in my mind. You think you exist, but no… I created you. And remember… Never… They can't stop me… No… They don't understand…"

He raised his voice, sweat and saliva running down his face and mouth.

He began experiencing hallucinations of visualizations: people appearing in the room, unknown voices commanding him to stop breathing, lights that seemed to hover over him. The psychiatrist observed closely, recording every reaction to adjust treatment.t one she would carry forever. "Every hallucination is a signal for us. It's not reality, but his mind trying to reveal hidden fear," the nurse said.

"It's true, Doctor," she added as she carefully selected the medications for him. She spoke no more, only completing the selection.

Nurse: "Dr. Kodra, you will receive these medications gradually. They are not weapons, but a way to save your mind."

Arbeni tried to resist, but his body was exhausted and his mind began to slowly surrender. A heavy silence filled the room as he watched the calm of the staff, feeling it as something foreign, frightening, yet necessary.

He was beginning to realize this was not surrender—it was the first step toward preserving himself, even though every inch of his mind rebelled against reality. Psychiatric Hospital No. 5 was calm, but Arbeni felt no peace. Every step of the nurses, every sound from the window, every reflection of light on the walls appeared to him as hidden threats. He sat on the bed, his body trembling, and began to visualize the voice of Qirlli, his imaginary friend who followed him everywhere.

Qirlli (in Arbeni's mind):
"Lying here, it seems as if you surrender, as if everything around you has lost meaning and every chance to act is gone. But perhaps this is only a mask, an illusion for those who want to see weakness in you. In truth, my mind is never conquered, and every second of silence is a secret plan. Every breath, every small movement gathers information, plotting revenge. Surrender and revenge are not separate; they are two faces of the same coin, and I bet on both simultaneously. Sometimes, it seems easier to appear powerless, to be a shadow waiting for the right moment to strike. Every stretch of the body, every silence, is strategy—and my strategy is revenge, coming with indisputable force."

These were notes found in a notebook—accurate, yet produced by a sick mind.
He groaned, moving his arms and legs in protest… then spoke:
Arbeni (slamming his hand on the bed, voice trembling):
"No… I cannot surrender… Not now, not here. Surrender means giving them what they want, giving them the satisfaction of seeing me broken. They only see my weary body, my wounds, my long silence… but they cannot see what boils inside me. They don't understand. They cannot understand.
My power is not in muscles, not in screams, not in blind violence. It is in my patience, in the mind that never sleeps, in the memory that notes every injustice, every face. They think I am extinguished, that I have finally lain down. They are gravely mistaken. I am still here. I am still holding on. And that is my true power—never surrendering, even when everything around me says the end has come."
The nurses approached carefully, preparing medications to calm the hallucinations and obsessions. Each dose felt like an attack on his In that fragile moment, where external calm clashed mercilessly with the chaos of his mind… Arbeni could no longer distinguish reality from unreality.
Qirlli (in his mind, softened by the medication):
"Now you have time to think, Arbeni… to reflect, not to act. Everything you've done can be analyzed, understood… and maybe corrected."
Arbeni sank deeper into the bed, feeling the weight of shame and inner fear:

"I don't want to go backward, but… I can't forget anything. Every step I took… every threat… every word… it's all still here."
In his head, a storm of thoughts gathered…
Psychiatrist:
"Every reflection is a step toward healing. It's never too late to recognize mistakes, accept responsibility, and start redirecting the course of your life."
Arbeni (sitting silently):
"But how… how can I stop this chaos in my mind? How do I return… to reality?"

Psychiatrist (smiling calmly, eyes piercing beneath the surface):
"With patience, Arbeni… It's not about waking up one day fully healed, fully strong. Every day has its own challenges; every small step is a victory, often invisible at first. Look here," – he gestured lightly to the table holding simple objects – "Every ordinary thing, every simple object, has taken time and care to remain in place, to function as intended. The same goes for you. You won't be whole tomorrow, but you'll be stronger than yesterday.
It's a slow path, with no giant leaps, but every small step counts. There is no shame in feeling weak, no shame in feeling exhausted, because all of that is part of the strength of the future. Let's not forget: strength is not measured by how fast we move, but by the courage to continue when the road seems hopeless. And you have that courage, Arbeni… even when you don't feel it, it's there, waiting to erupt."

The day passed slowly. Nurses observed every gesture, and the calm of the room began to influence his mind, giving Arbeni a new sense:
Control over his thoughts.
He was not free yet, but he began to understand that the greatest power was not to possess someone else, but to master himself.
One day, Elira's lawyer visited the hospital to discuss legal procedures and ensure her protection. Arbeni felt his presence as a reminder of legal authority and consequences.

Lawyer:
"Dr. Kodra, the law has no hatred, only justice. Every action you've taken has consequences, and now it's time to accept responsibility."

Arbeni (quietly):
"Yes… I understand… But… it's not easy to accept everything I've lost."

He lowered his head, staring at the floor. "Alright, lawyer," he added. "I will pay… just don't let Elira leave me."
In that moment, Arbeni experienced a deep reflection: his dark thoughts and obsessions collided with reality and the law, showing him that the path to healing and understanding his actions was long, but possible.
He lay on the bed, watching the soft lights of the room ripple like waves across a calm sea. His brain was a labyrinth of darkness and obsession; his thoughts oscillated between

past, present, and hallucinations that lurked in every corner.

Qirlli (imaginary, sitting beside him, calm but threatening): "Arbeni… Watch carefully every step you take here. They call it healing, but I know how thin the line is between recovery and disappearance. Every step is a balance: on one side, loss; on the other, salvation. And you move without knowing where you place your foot. You think you're progressing, but maybe you're forgetting. And forgetting is a loss deeper than pain.

They want your calm, not your truth. They want a controlled, predictable Arbeni, not the one who keeps the fire inside.

But don't be mistaken: salvation doesn't always come as light. Sometimes it comes as darkness that teaches you to see differently. I won't tell you which step is right, because I am part of your doubt too. I am your fear and your strength at once.

Choose for yourself, Arbeni… because no one else can do it for you. Every step you take here, no matter how small it seems, is irreversible. A silent movement that either slowly extinguishes you—quietly, without noise, without screams—making you forget who you were and why you fought… or makes you rise again, giving shape to a new pain, but also a new reason to continue.Don't seek clear signs, because there are none here. The path doesn't light up before you; it opens only after you step on it. Even I, your darkest voice, do not know which step is true. I am only the mirror of your doubt, the shadow that follows

when you think you're alone.
Here, truth doesn't appear as a pure light that illuminates everything and ends doubt. It comes as an open, painful wound, one that doesn't demand immediate healing, but acceptance. It's a pain you cannot avoid, because it shows you that you still feel, that you are still alive. Many confuse truth with calm, but here, truth is turmoil—it's a confrontation with what you've hidden from yourself.
Your choice will not be weighed by what comes next, by gain or loss, by healing or destruction. It will be measured only by the courage to make it, by the strength not to remain frozen in fear. Even a wrong step is an act of life, because passivity is the softest, most invisible death.
By choosing, Arbeni, you accept risk, pain, and uncertainty. You accept that you may fail, but also that you may rise again. And it is in this fragile, yet honest act that your true survival lies: not in perfection, not in correct answers, but in the courage to say 'yes' to life, even when it comes broken to you."
Arbeni (hands trembling, struggling to control his breath): "Everything… every sound… They're all following me… I can't escape… They're everywhere…"
The nurses watched carefully, recording every sign of stress, every rapid heartbeat, every word muttered under his breath. He began making random movements, as if trying to hide something, while his eyes tracked every object that seemed calm but to him signaled threat.

Psychiatrist (reviewing the chart):

"Look… the price of lost control is high. We must be patient and careful. Every hallucination is a signal that must be treated tactfully."
Arbeni felt a terror within: not just fear of the staff or environment, but of his own thoughts and obsessions. He spoke to Qirlli, who was now becoming more vivid and powerful in his mind:
Qirlli:
"See… they're trying to stop you… But they cannot stop your thoughts. Your mind is free… even in this prison of calm."freedom, yet his body could not resist them.Nurse: "Dr. Kodra, these medications are not to stop you—they are to save your mind. Every step is for your safety and the safety of others."
Arbeni (paranoid, eyes following their movements): "My safety… They don't understand… They don't understand… What I want… I want Elira, and that's all."After a few hours, Elira's lawyer arrived at the hospital, accompanied by a representative from the U.S. Embassy in Tirana. Everyone looked on with respect—and sometimes fear.
Lawyer: "Arbeni, remember, you are here for treatment, not punishment. But you must understand… Your actions toward Ms. Dosti cannot go without consequences."
Embassy Representative: "Ms. Dosti will have our full protection. No action will go unmonitored, and no threat will remain unaddressed legally."Arbeni felt their words as foreign. In his mind, perception of reality and his own power was blurred. He spoke to Qirlli:
Qirlli: "See… They cannot take your mind completely. But

they can stop your actions… They are powerful, and they are everywhere…"

He sank into the bed, giving his body some rest, but his mind remained filled with darkness, obsessions, and hallucinations. Nurses recorded every reaction, monitoring blood pressure, heartbeat, and movements.

Psychiatrist: "Arbeni, every attack, every paranoid glance, every sound you notice here is a reflection of your mind. We cannot change it instantly, but we can help you avoid destroying yourself and others."

The regional captain (without the lawyer) then looked Arbeni in the eyes:

"This is the moment where law and mental treatment converge. Without our intervention, the situation could have been much more dangerous for everyone."

Arbeni remained silent, eyes staring both inside and outside the room, feeling an internal struggle between his old strength and the new weakness imposed by reality. He understood this was the first great battle for survival—not against Elira, but against himself and his own mind.

After a few days at Psychiatric Hospital No. 5, routine began to establish a calm, yet tense rhythm. Arbeni woke each morning under the watchful eyes of the nurses; every movement was monitored, and the medications gradually began to calm his body and mind.

The psychiatrist entered the room, reviewing his chart:

Psychiatrist: "The medications are starting to take effect. Heartbeats are calmer, hallucinations are decreasing. Now we can begin to talk about what happened in your past."

Arbeni (sitting on the bed, pale): "I don't understand… I feel… calmer… But everything I did, I did to keep Elira from leaving me…"

The nurse approached slowly and handed him a glass of water. He took it with trembling hands, as if even the light weight of the glass was too heavy. His fingers slipped slightly, water spilling in the glass, unconsciously reflecting his inner turmoil. He drank slowly, but the taste offered no relief—it was cold, innocent, and for that reason, unbearable.

Every object around him seemed calm, immobile, almost indifferent: the neatly made bed, white walls, dim light falling through the window. It was a false calm, one that could not penetrate his mind. Within him, thoughts spun endlessly, driven like nails into his consciousness. Obsessions returned constantly, repeating the same scenes, words, mistakes he could no longer undo.

Regret weighed on his chest—not as an emotional outburst, but as a continuous, silent burden that left no room for free breath. He knew time moved forward, that the world outside continued normally, but for him, everything remained trapped inside… He began to visualize moving shadows, figures flying over the table in the room, and voices advising or commanding him. The nurses explained carefully:

Nurse:

"Every vision is temporary, Dr. Kodra. Your mind is trying to make sense of things, struggling within itself. We are here to help you, not to harm you."

But Arbeni could not stop so easily. He felt surrounded, hunted, and controlled by every object and every sound. He experienced a total loss of power, but also a conscious awareness of his own fragility.

Then the psychiatrist spoke, slowly and calmly:
"Every day here is a step toward calm. This is not the end of the world, but the beginning of a process where you will learn to control your thoughts, understand your obsessions, and reclaim power over yourself."Arbeni sat silently. The voices in his head gradually quieted, but shadows and ghosts of the past remained, making every moment in the hospital an inner battle. He realized that this quiet prison was only a new arena, where no one else needed to be controlled except himself and his mind.After several weeks of controlled treatment, the hospital staff decided to grant Arbeni a small privilege—a little freedom to move within a designated area of the complex. He was immediately thrilled, but he did not realize that this freedom was limited and that his movements were continuously monitored.He remembered gaining that freedom. Arbeni (bursting out of the room, voice loud, torn by anxiety):
"Elira! Where are you?!" — His voice collided with the corridor, echoing back, unfamiliar, as if it no longer belonged to him.
"Don't hide… please come out…." Then he shouted, "Don't leave me alone in this madhouse!"

He paused for a moment, breathing heavily, eyes wandering

across the empty space.
"No one can save me!" — The scream burst from his chest, harsh, desperate. "Not the doctors, not their words, not their promises! They mean nothing!"
He realized that no one could save him now. His steps became unsteady, but determination lit up his face.
"I will find you, Elira!" — He shouted again, with all his voice. This time not just as a search, but as a vow.
"Even if I have to face every darkness inside me, even if the path destroys me… I will find you!"
His voice hung in the air, between fear and defiance, a testimony that even in his most broken moment, Arbeni was still moving, still searching—and that search was the last form of his hope.
He continued to speak to Elira, addressing the sky, as if she had gone to the afterlife.
The nurses tried to intervene, but he didn't hear them. His voice was full of paranoia and hatred, as if the entire hospital were a terrain where she could be hiding.
Nurse:
"Dr. Kodra, calm down! She isn't here. You are in a safe place. You cannot leave this area!"
The voice of the security guards could be heard, but Arbeni could not stop. His eyes searched everything, every light and sound, as signs that he might see Elira. He looked in every direction, shouting her name, experiencing fear, anger, and obsession—all at once.

Qirlli (imaginary):
"Arbeni… they deceived you…" — The voice came low, slow, like a truth no one wants to hear.
"I don't know where she is. No one told you the truth, because the truth was too heavy to bear. Don't look where she once was, because that world no longer exists. You cannot expect everything to be as it was, as if nothing changed, as if wounds could close themselves and time could reverse. What you lost will not return in the same form—and perhaps neither are you the same person you once were.
They deceived you, not just about where she is, but about the idea that hope is a return. Hope is not a return, Arbeni. It is confrontation. It is accepting that what you seek may no longer be there, and yet continuing to move forward.
Because waiting for an unchanged world is another trap. And if you keep chasing that illusion, you will lose even the little strength you have left. Now you are here, not to restore the past—but to decide whether you have the courage to live with the truth that remains."

Arbeni (shaking, reaching out):
"No… I can't accept it… She is here… She must be… No one can save me…"
The nurses and psychiatrist watched carefully, keeping a safe distance as his emotions erupted. He did not know that Elira was already in the U.S., fully protected by her lawyer and the embassy, far from any danger.
Then the psychiatrist intervened quietly, taking slow, deliberate steps.

Psychiatrist (calmly):
"Arbeni, please… you must accept reality. She is not here. Every step you take now is only for your health and to avoid harming anyone."
But Arbeni could not stop. He moved quickly, grabbed every object as if it were a sign, and his voice grew louder, calling Elira with desperation and fury mixed together.
The nurses recorded every action and word, monitoring tension and heart rate, preparing to intervene quickly if the situation got out of control. He did not know that the outside world had already protected Elira, and any attempt to reach her was doomed to fail.

Arbeni (sitting briefly on a stool, breathing heavily):
"Yes… I can't understand where she is… Why did she leave??… She doesn't know… I can't live without her… I can't live…"
Qirlli (calm but firm):
"Arbeni… this is your new path. No external power can give you pleasure anymore. Elira is gone. You won't find her. Only you can decide what remains of yourself."
He sat quietly, feeling the weight of reality, but also beginning to understand that his tension, frustration, and anger would have to be channeled to face healing.
Days passed slowly in the hospital. Arbeni began to understand that every step he took was limited, monitored, and supported by the doctors' routine. He could no longer search for Elira loudly, because she was far away in the U.S., but the thought of her still haunted him.
One afternoon, after taking his medication, he sat in his

room, watching the light coming through the window. Qirlli, the imaginary friend, sat beside him, silent this time.
Qirlli (slow, calm, with an unsettling calmness):
"Arbeni… perhaps it is time to look beyond fear. Not to erase it, but to understand it. Your fear is not your enemy; it is proof that you have wanted something with your whole being. But when fear starts to direct every step, it becomes a prison.
You have tried to control everything: people, time, memories, fate. You believed that if you held everything tightly in your hands, nothing would be lost. But life does not work that way. The tighter you grip, the more it slips. And what slips most painfully is what you once wanted: that idea of a just world, a happy ending. It no longer exists. Everyone is a wolf, and unfaithful, Doctor Arbeni. Learn it at last.
You cannot control everything, Arbeni. And you cannot have everything you once wanted, because that 'once' no longer exists. It was a version of life that did not yet know the price of loss. Now you are here, with emptier hands, but eyes that can see more clearly.
Looking beyond fear does not mean surrender. It means accepting your limits without breaking under them. Because only then, when you stop fighting what you cannot change, do you begin to understand what you can still save."
Arbeni (lowering his head, voice trembling): "Yes… I know… everything I've done has brought me here… And everything I want… is no longermine…"

he psychiatrist entered the room again for a routine check and observed the change in his demeanor.Psychiatrist: "I see improvement, Dr. Kodra. Your mind is beginning to accept reality. Reflection and acceptance of loss are the first steps toward peace."
Arbeni (with dim eyes, taking a deep breath):
"Sometimes I feel free… but fear, anger… they won't let me be."

Psychiatrist: "That's normal. Every feeling is part of the process. You must understand that the greatest power is not to control someone else, but to master yourself."
Arbeni sat in silence for several minutes, experiencing the clash between his former strength and his present weakness. He realized that every obsession, every hallucination, and every inner attack reflected his fragility, and that the path to healing would not be easy.
Qirlli (imaginary, calm, nonjudgmental):
"You haven't lost everything, Arbeni. Loss feels total because pain speaks louder than reason, but there is still something that hasn't been taken from you: choice. It's the only thing you cannot lose—unless you surrender it yourself.
You have the power to change the course of your life—not by erasing what has happened, because the past cannot be erased—but by accepting it without turning it into poison. What you have done, what you haven't done, your mistakes and silences—they are all part of you, but they do not have to be your only guide.

To accept the past means no longer using it as an excuse to hurt yourself or others. It means breaking the cycle of destruction you inherited—and perhaps, unknowingly, continued. This is not a heroic act, Arbeni. It is a quiet, everyday act, and that is precisely why it is difficult.

And yes, you can build a future that does not destroy anyone. Not a perfect future, but one that is not fed by the pain of others. A future where you don't have to triumph over anyone just to exist. This is your last and truest possibility: not to save the world, but to stop destroying it."
He looked at the light coming through the window and, for the first time, felt a strange sense of calm and reflection. It was not a grand triumph, but a small step toward awareness and acceptance.

Arbeni (in a low voice, almost to himself):
"Maybe… power isn't about controlling someone else… but mastering yourself…"
The nurses and psychiatrist watched him carefully, noting every sign of reflection. He sat there, between loss and insight, realizing that self-control and inner peace were the true weapons.
The day ended, and Arbeni remained quiet, contemplating the long road ahead, understanding that hope and reflection were the first steps toward saving himself.
He sat on his hospital bed. Everything around him was calm, but his mind was a turbulent sea of emotions. Suddenly, reality hit him like a sudden storm: Elira was no

longer there; she was far away, in the U.S., protected and safe.
He rose, covering his face with his hands, and a deep sense of loss filled every cell of his body. Tears filled his eyes, and his voice shook:

Arbeni (to himself, softly and brokenly):
"No… I don't have her… I don't have her anymore… Elira… oh, Elira…"Qirlli (imaginary, silent at first, then gentle):
"Arbeni… this is reality. You cannot have her anymore. Now you have to face yourself."He relived every memory of the past with Elira: her smiles, late-night talks, shared fears, and dreams that would never come true. The pain was indescribable—a mixture of regret, loss, and awareness of his mistakes.
Psychiatrist (entering slowly, in a calm voice):
"Arbeni… tears are not weakness. They are part of the process. You are understanding, feeling, and accepting reality. This is the first step toward healing."Arbeni sat there, crying and trembling, while the nurses observed carefully, letting him experience every emotion without interruption. For the first time, he felt the depth of his loss, but he also began to understand that this was the moment of true reflection on his actions and their consequences.
Arbeni (whispering to himself, shaken, almost inaudible):
"Everything… everything I've done… has brought me here…"—the words came out with difficulty, each one heavier than the last. "Every choice, even the ones I thought

were right… even the ones I justified as necessary… all of them brought me to this point."
He closed his eyes for a moment, as if trying to go back in time.
"I thought I was building something… protecting someone… fighting for meaning." His voice trembled.
"But now I see only the consequences. I see the path filled with traces I can never erase."
A heavy silence filled his chest.
"And now… I don't have what I wanted anymore…"—the sentence hung, unfinished, as if he was afraid to speak it. Then came the raw truth, stripped of all illusion:
"I don't have Elira anymore…"Her name slipped from his lips like a fresh wound.
"Everything I did, I did thinking she would be there in the end. That losses would make sense." His breath broke.
"But without her… every victory feels empty. And every step forward… a punishment."
He remained silent, not because he had no words left, but because he was finally accepting what he had avoided most: not only the loss of Elira, but the fact that nothing can restore the person he was before losing her.Qirlli stayed by his side, silent, letting him realize: power is not possessing another, but mastering yourself and facing loss.
Arbeni sat there, crying, feeling the pain and regret, but also beginning to understand a profound truth: only acceptance of reality and reflection on his mistakes could give him a chance to save his mind and his life.
He called for Elira aloud:

Arbeni: "Elira! Where are you?! No one can save me… Only you can save me! I will find you!"
Nurse: "Dr. Kodra, calm down! She is not here. You are in a safe place!"

He didn't speak. His hallucinations and obsessions were powerful. Qirlli, his imaginary friend, followed every moment:
Qirlli: "Look… they are trying to stop you… but they cannot stop your thoughts. Your mind is free… even in this quiet prison."
He did not know that Elira was already far away, thousands of miles away, in the U.S., protected by her lawyer and embassy representatives. Any information that could have reached him was filtered, controlled, and every step he took had already been anticipated by an invisible network he did not understand.
Any attempt to find her, contact her, or reach her at any moment was doomed to fail. He could move, plan, tremble, and shout—but every strategy was just a move in a game whose rules he did not know. She had already been protected from every possible step he could take. He didn't know, he couldn't know—and that only deepened his pain: every desire, every hope, every effort was powerless against a reality that was fixed and merciless.

In this isolation, Arbeni was not only fighting against time and distance, but also against his own helplessness. Every action he took, no matter how determined or desperate,

was merely a reflection of his longing to reclaim what he had lost… something that no longer belonged to him.
Day after day passed amid medication, monitoring, and reflection. The psychiatrist and nurses helped him face reality, while Qirlli guided him toward self-awareness.
Psychiatrist: "Every reflection is a step toward peace. It's never too late to understand your mistakes, take responsibility, and begin to change the course of your life."
Qirlli: "You haven't lost everything. You still have the chance to change the course of your life, to accept the past, and to build a future that destroys no one."
Days went by, and Arbeni began to truly understand Elira's loss. He sat on his bed, eyes filled with tears:
Arbeni: "No… I don't have her…" — the words stuck in his throat, as if his body would not allow him to speak them fully. "I don't have her anymore…"

He struggled to breathe, his eyes filled with a void that tears could not fill. "Elira…" — her name came out like a belated plea, a call with nowhere left to go. "Oh, Elira…"
His hands fell powerless to his sides. "Everything I was… everything I thought I would become… it's tied to you."
His voice trembled, but did not rise; it was surrender, not a scream. "Now every memory is an open wound. Every hope… is a lie I told myself to survive."
He closed his eyes, as if the darkness seemed more fitting than the light.
"I didn't just lose you," he whispered, "I lost the person I was when I loved you."

In that moment, pain demanded no solution. It simply existed—heavy, silent, irreversible—as a truth that could no longer be denied. His suffering was indescribable, a mixture of regret, loss, and awareness of his mistakes. The psychiatrist and nurses let him feel every emotion without interference, giving him space for inner reflection.
Psychiatrist (speaking calmly and warmly, looking at Arbeni):
"Tears are not weakness, Arbeni. Many people think that crying means surrendering, being powerless. But it's not. Tears are proof of hidden strength—they show you are facing what hurts you, not denying it, but feeling it fully. They are part of the process, part of the path that leads from inner darkness to a light that may not be immediately visible, but is there, waiting to emerge.

When you let your pain out, you are understanding, feeling, and accepting reality—both the painful and the inevitable. This is the first step toward healing, the first step toward reclaiming yourself. It's not the end, not a solution to every problem. But it is the moment you begin to take control over your fragility, when you start to understand that you can exist with the pain and move forward without being destroyed by it. Accept this pain, Arbeni… and you'll see that from it, a strength you never imagined exists within you can emerge."
In the quiet room, Arbeni relived every memory of his past with Elira, realizing that the road to healing was long but possible. For the first time, he felt a sense of calm and

reflection—a small step toward self-awareness and inner strength.

Arbeni (sitting quietly, eyes inward, voice low but determined):

"Maybe… power isn't about controlling someone else…" — his words came as a slow unraveling of long, tangled, painful thoughts. "I always thought power was controlling people, directing their fates, keeping everything under my light. But every bit of control I tried to hold… it destroyed me, drowned me more than anyone else."

He took a deep breath, as if each word needed space to come out.

"I understand now… Power is not conquering, forcing, or taking what is not yours. Power is mastering yourself. Knowing your fears, your pain, your desires… and deciding not to let them control you.

It's the hardest fight, because there is no external enemy to blame. It's facing yourself, your mistakes, your lost desires, the wounds you thought would never heal. And maybe… maybe when you achieve that, when you master yourself, you realize that every other kind of control is just an illusion."

He paused, feeling the weight of his words, and for the first time, a quiet sense of calm pierced the sadness and tension. He sat there, crying, reflecting on mistakes, consequences, and loss, while Qirlli and the psychiatrist acted as inner guides. Arbeni lay in his hospital room, ears dulled, gaze empty, watching the light come through the window without hope.

He had lost Elira, every connection to the outside world, and every sense of control over his life. Outside the hospital doors, the city continued quietly, but for him, every sound was a threat, every shadow a reminder of his failures. Qirlli, the imaginary friend, had silently vanished, leaving Arbeni alone with his dark thoughts.

Arbeni (to himself, voice low and trembling):

"Everything… everything is lost… There's no Elira… no strength… no hope…"

The psychiatrist entered, hoping to see a sign of reflection, but Arbeni's voice and eyes were empty. He could not face the pain, the loss, and the deep regret that had destroyed him from within.

The nurses watched quietly. For the first time, he did not scream, did not demand, did not fight. He had lost everything that connected him to the world and to himself. Every medication, every medical effort, every improvement was just another disturbance in his shattered mind.

In this endless silence, Arbeni realized a bitter truth: he could not save himself. The loss was permanently deep, and his mind had become an invisible prison, where no hope could penetrate.

He lay quietly, feeling only the emptiness and darkness that remained within. There was no Elira, no hope, no future. Only the room and his desperate inner voice, and a mind that could not save itself.

Dr. Arbeni had suffered a second loss. Elira was gone… and he was admitted to a psychiatric hospital. According to the psychiatrist, he could no longer recover; his condition

worsened with each passing year. “Better dead than losing your mind,” people said.
He existed between sleep and unreal dreams, between endless attempts to heal. Edyta, the quiet and frail nurse, entered the room, greeted him, and said:
— “How are you today, doctor?”
Arbeni did not speak or move from the bed.
— “I’m in the world of dreams,” he finally said, taking a deep breath.
— “I’m in the world of sorrows… and I cry for the love I’ve lost…” — “You don’t have to cry,” the nurse said. “Women are like buses: when one leaves, another comes. Right, doctor? You’re very handsome too—you don’t need to cry over a woman!”

Arbeni took a deep breath as the medicine melted on his tongue. Then he whispered in a voice barely audible:
Arbeni (looking out the window, voice low, locked in silence):
“Birds in a cage don’t fly… — he said. — And they don’t sing either.”
He paused for a moment, feeling the emptiness around him. His words were not just about birds, but about everything in life that is kept locked up, forbidden, constrained by rules that make no sense.
“When they fly, birds share joy—with the sky, with the sun… with the wind. But when trapped inside, every wing, every note of their song is broken. It stops you from living freely, stops you from feeling.”
He looked at the cage with hidden pain.

"And that's the worst part… Not just that they don't fly, but because they forget they once had wings. They once had a song. And worst of all… maybe they forget what freedom even means."

His words hung in the air, a warning, a hidden reflection on his own life: every cage is not just the iron that holds you inside, but also the fear that keeps you from rising. And as birds fall silent, a person can forget the sound of their own self.

The nurse raised her eyes to him but said nothing. In that dim room, Arbeni's words sounded like a bitter truth, holding all of his broken life within.

She finished speaking and handed him the morning medication. Arbeni looked at it blankly, expressionless. He said nothing. He simply took it and swallowed in silence.

In the hospital's café and offices, everyone talked about him, but no one dared speak to him.

— "You will heal, doctor," the nurse said with a gentle smile. "The world moves on even without Elira. You don't have to cry so much over her. Once you leave here, women will come to you—especially you, who look like a top model!"

Arbeni chuckled softly, but the laugh quickly died.

— "The heart does not forgive a love twice," he said, staring at the closed window. — "First love is like paradise… Madam."

The nurse lowered her eyes, embarrassed by the depth of

his words. In that quiet room, the sound of Arbeni's voice felt like the confession of a man who had lost the world but not his soul.

FIRST THERAPY SESSION

The therapy room was white, simple, with no clock on the wall, no objects to distract the mind. Only a low table, two chairs, and a tall window that never opened.

The psychiatrist, Dr. Mali Shkodra, sat first, placing his notebook beside him.

— "Arbeni…" he said in a calm voice. "This is our first session. You don't have to speak. Just listen if it feels hard."

Arbeni looked at him with tired, clouded eyes, like someone emerging from a long storm inside his own mind.

— "I'm tired of listening, doctor," he replied slowly. "I've heard too much… inside myself. I want the voices to be quiet."

Dr. Mali raised his eyebrows slightly. "What do the voices say?"

Arbeni lowered his head.

— "They tell me to go back. They tell me she will not come. They tell me I was wrong to live."

Silence fell. The window filled with pale winter light.— "The voices you mention," the psychiatrist said slowly, "do they have faces? Do you remember any of them?"

Arbeni raised his eyes. They filled with dry tears.

— "Yes… one face. Elira's. Sometimes she scolds me, sometimes she pleads. Sometimes she asks me to follow her."

Dr. Mali quickly wrote something down.
— "And how do you answer?"
Arbeni (bitter laugh, trembling voice, eyes full of pain):
"How do I answer someone who isn't here anymore?" — the question rose from his chest like a lost cry. He laughed bitterly—not from joy, but from the pain that consumed him inside.
"The heart speaks in its shadow, doctor… With what remains when the person you loved is gone, when every old hope has become unreachable."

He took a deep breath, as if each word needed space to emerge, but sometimes all that came out was the sound of unnamed pain.
"You can't answer the shadows… You can't convince them, you can't soothe them. You can only look and feel how broken the world is when someone is missing."
He lowered his head and whispered again:
"Sometimes I think this silence is darker than the absence itself. Because absence takes what you had, but silence shows you that everything else you wanted… is gone too."
He laughed bitterly again, like someone laughing through pain, realizing for the first time that some questions have no answers, and some shadows never disappear.
The psychiatrist closed the notebook and stood.
— "That's enough for today. Today you've shown me the pain. In the next session, we will begin to find a way out of it."
Arbeni said nothing. He only looked out the window.
— "Birds in a cage don't fly… — he whispered. — But

maybe they can survive."
Dr. Mali approached the door.
— "Unlike birds, Arbeni… humans can open their own cages."
He left. The room remained silent, and for the first time, Arbeni felt a thin thread of light within himself.
THE DREAM THAT REVEALS THE TRUTH
That night, after the first session, Arbeni fell into a deep sleep. The psychiatric medication had dulled his senses, but not his spirit. In sleep, his soul opened like an old creaking door.
He found himself in a vast white field. No trees, no light, no shadows. Only whiteness… as if he were inside his own empty mind.
In the middle of the field stood a large iron cage. Inside—a black bird, silent, frozen. The bird stared him in the eyes, neither singing nor moving.
— "Why don't you fly?" Arbeni asked.
The bird opened its beak, and the voice that came out was Elira's.
— "Because you locked me here, Arbeni."
He froze. His heart pounded.
— "No… You left on your own, Elira. You abandoned me!"
The cage shivered slightly. Elira's voice became clearer:
— "No. My leaving was the consequence… not the cause. You locked me in with your fear, your doubts, your jealousy you wouldn't admit. You trapped me in your cage of suspicion… and I drowned there."
The white field gradually darkened. The sky turned gray.

Arbeni approached the cage, hands trembling.
— "Have you come to scold me?"
— "No," the voice said. "I came to tell you the truth… to save you. You're not crazy, Arbeni. You are guilty."
Arbeni fell to his knees. Tears streamed down.
— "Can I bring you back?" he asked, voice broken like a dry branch under winter weight. — "Can I open the cage and have you again?"
The black bird did not move immediately. Its feathers shivered lightly, as if carrying the weight of everything… Then he lowered his head slowly—not as a sign of surrender, but as a bow to the truth.
"Open the cage for me, Arben. Not for me to return, but for you to leave."Freedom, for me, would not mean coming back. It would mean that you, too, could live without killing me every day inside yourself.
The words fell between them like a gentle, inevitable sentence. Arben felt something crack deep in his chest—not his heart, but the illusion that he could keep someone alive by locking them away.
He raised his hands and grasped the iron bars. They were cold. Colder than the hospital corridors where hope faded under artificial lights. Colder than the long nights of loneliness, when thoughts turned like knives that never tire. He gripped them tightly, as if the iron itself were guilty of everything, and with a strength he didn't know he possessed, he pushed—to open them.
The cage opened.
The black bird emerged slowly, without rush, like someone

who does not flee but is freed. It flew upward, and as its wings sliced through the air, the gray sky began to lighten—like a wound finally breathing. Before it vanished, Elira's voice echoed—calm, merciless, and true:
"The truth heals you… only if you accept it."
Arben woke in bed, drenched in sweat. His body trembled—not from fear, but from the endless exhaustion of thoughts that had tortured him all night. His heart pounded heavily, as if learning a new rhythm for the first time. For the first time in many months, he did not cry. No tears broke free. And this absence of visible pain carried a strange weight—a terrifying, rigid calm that brought no relief. Only emptiness.
He turned his head to the window. Dawn was creeping in slowly, without promises, without grandeur. Just light.
"I am the cage…" he whispered. "I have to open it…"
The words fell over his troubled mind like a slow light—not comforting, but merciless in its clarity. In that moment, he understood something he had refused to admit: the truth was not Elira's loss. It was not the distance, nor the irreversible separation that had divided them.
The truth was deeper. Bitterer.
It was the loss of himself—and the fact that, to keep someone, he had locked his own soul behind iron bars.

Everything else—pain, loss, fear—had been only a reflection of what he had left behind inside himself. He realized how small, how limited, how closed off he had been, waiting for someone else to save what only he could save.

A moment of silence filled the room. His breathing slowed, and a gentle awareness began to seep in: every small step toward freedom was not to find someone else, but to reclaim the part of himself he had lost. A quiet, simple beginning… but a true one.

Elira arrives in the U.S.

A year later, she published a long article in Le Monde recounting her experiences.

Title:

"Shadows of the Red Capital – Tirana… Dr. Psychopath"

Washington D.C. – New Steps on Free Land

When the plane touched down at Dulles International Airport, Elira's hands were still trembling. Not from fear, but from a sudden sense of liberation—a feeling of air unlike any other until you breathe it yourself. The city of Washington stretched across the horizon like a calm painting: white monuments, federal buildings with their cold columns, wide streets, greenery everywhere, and an order that seemed almost unreal compared to the chaotic noise of Tirana.

As she stepped off the plane, two Department of Homeland Security agents waited at the gate. One held a folder stamped "State Department – Humanitarian Entry." The other smiled gently:

"Welcome to the United States, Miss Elira. You are safe now."

She hadn't heard a sentence so believable in years.

A place where procedures calm, not threaten.

As she walked through the airport corridors, Elira noticed

details that would have been unavoidable in Albania: no raised voices, no eyes tracking her, no tension among the airport officers. Only calm professionalism.At the checkpoint, a female officer in a blue uniform kneeled slightly to meet her eye level:
"If you feel tired or unwell, just tell me. You're under our protection."
Elira signed three documents, provided protocol explanations, received her humanitarian entry stamp, and was escorted to the VIP waiting lounge reserved specifically for her.

Reception by the State Department

Outside the airport, a black SUV with federal plates awaited. Inside, a woman in her forties extended her hand: "I'm Catherine Miller, from the State Department. From today, you're under our civil protection program. You'll receive housing, legal and psychological support, and special status until you are ready to speak publicly."The car drove toward downtown Washington, passing the Pentagon, the Jefferson Memorial, and white buildings radiating calm solemnity. Elira looked out the window and thought:
"This city casts no shadows. Its light falls straight, without bending."
A New Home – An Unknown World
The State Department placed her in a secured house near a quiet building in Georgetown, an elegant neighborhood

with cobblestone streets and red-brick homes. Inside, a table was set with food, keys, a new American phone, and an envelope reading: You are safe. Rest first. We'll talk tomorrow.
She laughed for the first time in years. The laughter came spontaneously, light, simple, weightless.

The Interview That Shocked America
A week later, once she had stabilized, the call came:
"Ms. Elira, NBC News requests an exclusive interview. The show is Global Frontline Tonight, hosted by the renowned journalist Michael Abrams. Are you ready?"
Elira closed her eyes for a moment. It was time to speak.
The NBC studio in Washington was cold and professional, filled with cameras, lights, and a team treating her with complete respect. The journalist shook her hand:
"You don't have to be afraid anymore. Just tell your truth."
And she began…
The Road to Salvation – Television Testimony
The most powerful part of the interview did not come from raised voices, but from the heavy calm with which she began recounting the decisive moment in Tirana—the day she realized she had nowhere to return, and that help was no longer an option, but a vital necessity.
She paused briefly, as if gathering the fragments of that day, then spoke:
"They were following me everywhere, behind buildings, eavesdropping on my phone. They were threatening me…"
Not always directly, but enough for me to understand

that my life was being watched. I was alone. Unprotected. Voiceless.
She explained that her lawyer had tried to intervene, to open legal doors, to request guarantees—but the pressure had spread like a shadow over him too.
"He came under pressure as well. He began to pull back. Not out of fear for himself, but because he realized the system had decided not to listen. The Albanian police…"
She paused again, choosing her words carefully.
"They didn't take me seriously. Or they couldn't. Or they didn't want to. At that moment, it didn't matter which."

Her voice dropped lower.
"That night, I decided to go to the American Embassy. It was the hardest and clearest decision of my life."
She described entering the embassy as moving from darkness into a space where time seemed to stop. She came in with bloodshot eyes—from fear and sleeplessness—her body still trembling from the invisible pursuit she had endured for weeks.
"A Marine saw me and didn't ask any questions. He only said one sentence:
'You are safe now. Sit down.'"
She said that sentence was like a key that unlocked her breath. For the first time in a long time, her body believed her mind: the danger had ceased, at least for that moment.
"That's when my rescue began. The paperwork was processed within a few hours. No one promised me miracles, but everything worked with a clarity I had

never experienced before. The Albanian police didn't find me. They didn't ask. They didn't follow. I had already disappeared from danger."

She explained that she was taken out of the embassy in a diplomatic vehicle, in complete silence, under protection. The city that had once held her captive remained behind the dark glass, a memory no longer able to control her.
The last moment before the plane closed her story with an emotional fear:
"As I sat in my seat, my hands still cold, an American officer looked me straight in the eyes and said, 'Look forward, not back.'"
She paused for a few seconds, then added:
"That sentence helped me survive. Not just that day. Even today."
In the studio, silence fell—not the artificial kind of television silence, but human silence—the kind of calm that comes when no one dares to break the truth that has just been spoken.
Michael Abrams leaned slightly forward, his voice measured, without sensationalism:
"This is one of the most powerful, shocking, and meaningful testimonies we have ever heard on this program. A story that does not just reflect a personal experience but mirrors the pain, the silence, and the truth of a larger reality—a reality that forces us to reflect deeply as a society."

The studio lights continued to shine, but something had

changed—not just for her, but for everyone listening.

Shadows of the Red Capital – Tirana
By Elira
Tirana never sleeps completely. Even when the lights go out and the day's noise melts into the heavy night air, the shadows keep moving. They are the shadows of a capital that has changed colors, names, and masks, yet still carries the red of memory—a red that is not just ideology, but blood, fear, silence, and imposed obedience.
On its narrow streets and artificially widened squares, Tirana carries painful contrasts: towers rising on forgotten foundations, modern facades covering old wounds, new voices speaking freely over a land where speech was once a crime. The red capital is no longer the capital of slogans and banners, but its shadow still lives in mindsets, in inherited fear, in learned indifference.
These are the shadows not shown on tourist maps. The shadows of mothers who waited in vain, of intellectuals who disappeared without graves, of children who grew up learning to stay silent rather than speak. Tirana moves forward, yet it still looks back, as if afraid the past could reach it again.

"Shadows of the Red Capital" is not just memory. It is an open question: How free have we made ourselves from the past? How much of it still guides us? And can the future be built on forgetfulness without first confronting the truth?
Elira, Le Monde, special edition, after one year in the U.S.:

I had to go thousands of miles from Tirana to realize that the shadows that followed me were never truly mine. They were the shadows of a city built on fear, control, empty waiting, and thick silence—a silence that choked your throat, yet no one dared speak of it.

A year in the U.S. felt like another life: lighter air, wider streets, people speaking openly, journalists asking questions without hesitation. At first, the contrast hurt. It felt as if my body were still bound by the invisible wires of the city I had left behind. But then I started writing—I started speaking. And the words became light.

This is my testimony. Not just my story, but the story of a capital that knows how to smile only on the surface, while deep inside it hides its darkest wounds.

The Capital That Breathes in Fear

In Tirana, everything seems normal: full cafés, laughing voices, traffic lights ignored by everyone. But beneath this smooth exterior lives a hidden reality, written in no official report.

Fear. Fear that watches you, follows you, lingers behind your back. Fear that makes you turn your head, lower your voice, choose your words. Inherited, passed down like an unending curse.

In every corner of this city live two Tiranas: the day one, alive with café lights, and the night one, hidden behind closed windows, where people speak in innuendo and live in two realities: what they say, and what they think.

The Story I Never Spoke Aloud

I don't write to settle scores, but to show what happened to me—not as a victim, but as a witness.

In Tirana, a person can disappear in a single day. Not physically, but psychologically. You live, walk, go to work, greet people. But inside, someone else is dissolving. And no one notices as long as you maintain the façade.

"I fell into this trap. Not because I didn't see it, but because I believed it wouldn't touch me. I thought education, profession, experience, and inner strength would protect me. I thought being competent, prepared, and righteous was enough to stay free. But it isn't.

To have a profession, to be educated, to appear strong—these are only fragile shields when facing a system that does not attack the body, but the mind. A system that doesn't overthrow you with violence, but wears you down with pressure, suffocates you with fear, numbs you with the normalization of injustice. It doesn't demand open obedience; it teaches you to stay silent slowly.

When the system surrounds your mind, you have two choices: stay silent or leave. Staying silent means accepting, becoming…" Accomplice to a reality that corrodes you every day. To leave meant losing the ground beneath my feet—but saving myself.

I left. Not because I was weak, but because I refused to become part of the silence. I left to avoid growing accustomed to injustice, to avoid calling fear "normal," to avoid passing on my surrender to those who would come after me. I left because sometimes leaving is not escape—it is the final act of dignity.

The Last Moment Before Leaving

I remember the airport as if it were yesterday. Not the noise, not the metallic shouts over the loudspeakers, but the rigid sensation that had overtaken my body. It was as if I were walking in a space without gravity. Every step toward the boarding gate was a small detachment from who I had been, from who I thought I would become.

From the airplane window, Tirana looked like a sleeping child—peaceful, innocent, wrapped in a blanket of lights. But I knew that beneath that calm hid a city that could swallow you silently, leaving no trace, with no need for visible violence. A city that knew how to stay quiet better than it knew how to shout.

I felt a stab in my chest. It was not longing, nor pure pain. It was a kind of soft, silent punishment coming from within:

—"You didn't fight enough."

The voice was mine. It did not accuse me with cruelty, nor did it forgive me. It was the voice that remains when every excuse has fallen away, leaving a person alone with their conscience. For a moment, I thought of turning my head back, as if looking behind would restore the strength I had lost. But I knew there was nothing left for me there—except danger and enforced silence.

Then I realized something even harder: the hardest part was not leaving. It was what would come after. The confession. Finding the words. Not letting others tell my story in my place. Not remaining just a shadow, a lost name in a file, a distorted version of the truth.

I had to find my voice. To reclaim control over my life, my fear, what I had endured. And I could not do that in the land that had crushed me. I found my voice only after seeing Tirana from afar.
As the plane lifted and the city began to shrink, as buildings became dots and streets faint lines, I felt for the first time the real weight that had kept me bent for so long. Only when Tirana disappeared among the clouds did I understand how much it had burdened me—and how necessary it was to leave it behind. Not as escape, but as an act of survival.

At that moment, I felt no victory. No instant relief. Only a quiet promise to myself: that one day, when my voice was strong enough, I would no longer need to leave to be free.
What I Learned in America
In the U.S., I realized that freedom is not automatically courage. Freedom is open ground; courage is walking on it. There, no one asked why my voice trembled, why my hands clenched, why my eyes instinctively scanned behind me. There, no one judged me when I said I was afraid, when I admitted I had been under pressure, when I recounted being followed, watched, intimidated.
Instead of judgment, I was offered a glass of water and a calm expression:
"You are safe now. Tell everything."
That is how I began to write.
Why am I telling this now?
Because there are thousands like me.
Because Tirana struggles to see itself in the mirror.

Because fear does not fade unless it is brought into the light.

I love Tirana. I love it as you would someone who hurt you, but whom you still hope can change. And precisely because I love it, I say this:Our capital is not just a city of tall buildings and bright colors. It is an organism in need of healing. And healing begins only when someone has the courage to speak

This article is not revenge. It is the beginning of a process. I am speaking. Not because it is easy, but because silence has already cost too much. I speak for those who were drowned in fear, for the voices broken before they could be heard, for the truths endlessly pushed toward oblivion. My word is not revenge—it is remembrance. It is not noise, but light.

The Future: Light over Shadows

The future is not built by denying darkness, but by illuminating it. Every word spoken is a window opened; every truth acknowledged is a step forward. Shadows do not disappear immediately, but they lose power once they no longer hide.

I speak because I believe words still carry weight, that truth—even delayed—liberates, and that a society does not heal by forgetting but by daring to see itself in the eye. The future begins where fear ends. There, light is not a promise—it is a choice.

If someone reads this and says: "I have lived the same," then my mission has begun to bear fruit.

I do not want future generations to grow up among two

Tiranas—the Day and the Night. I want only one: a city unafraid of the truth.In the U.S., I found light. Now I want to send that light back, into the shadows of the Red Capital.
Washington, D.C. — New Steps in the Land of Freedom
Remember that when the plane touched down at Dulles International Airport, my hands were still trembling. It was not fear, but that sudden sense of release that comes when your body understands before your mind that it has survived. A light, almost imperceptible tremor, the result of a weight finally lifted from my shoulders.
The air I breathed at that moment was unlike any other. It was not merely air—it was space. It was the feeling that words would no longer turn against me, that thought would no longer condemn me, that silence would no longer be a condition of survival. It was the air of a place where the first question is not "who owns you?" but "who are you?"
As the wheels stopped and the engine noise faded, I realized I had crossed an invisible line. Behind me were shadows, learned fear, and hyper-awareness of every word. Ahead was the unknown—difficult, perhaps lonely—but free.
Remember this moment: freedom does not always arrive with cries of joy. Sometimes it comes with trembling hands, deep breaths, and a quiet inner certainty that, despite everything, you have made the right choice.
The State Department's Welcome
At the airport exit waited a black SUV with federal plates. Inside, a woman in her forties extended her hand:
"I'm Catherine Miller, from the State Department."
Her voice was calm, professional, without any need to

impose. The kind of voice that promises not emotion, but certainty.

“From today, you are under our civil protection program.” She paused, letting the words settle. Each sentence was not just information but measured assurance: “You will receive safe housing, specialized legal support, and…” You will have a special protection status

Until you are ready to speak publicly—if and when you choose to take that step yourself.Say:

There was no threat, no rush. Just a clear line between who I had been until then and who I could become. She wasn’t asking me to speak; she was giving me time. And perhaps for the first time, time was not my enemy.In that moment, I realized that protection does not mean hiding forever, but preparing to step into the light without breaking. That truth needs safety, not blind sacrifice. And that words, when supported, can become stronger than any fear.

I remember when the car drove toward downtown Washington, passing the Pentagon, the Jefferson Memorial, and the white buildings radiating quiet solemnity. I looked out the window and thought:

“This city has no shadows. It has light that falls straight, without bending.”

“You’re in a safe place now. Focus on resting. We’ll talk when you’re ready.”

The New Home — An Unknown World

The State Department placed her in a secured home, a calm building in Georgetown—an elegant neighborhood with cobblestone streets and red-brick houses preserving

old-world grace and quiet dignity. It was a calm unlike anything she had known—not fear-induced, but orderly, where no one asked questions and everything functioned without noise.

The house was simple, yet meticulously designed: neutral furniture, large windows letting in natural light, heavy curtains that closed completely when night fell over the city. Nothing without purpose, nothing excessive. A transitional space between the past and what had yet to take shape.

When the door closed softly behind her, she felt the weight of loneliness for the first time—not the empty kind, but the kind that forces you to confront yourself. Every room was a blank page. Every step on the floor echoed like a question: Who am I now, when no one knows me?

From the window, Georgetown stretched peacefully, almost indifferent to the stories carried from afar. Rare passersby moved slowly. Dogs leashed in front yards. Lights from cafes radiated a warmth she was not yet part of. Life continued, unaware of the escape, fear, and courage that had entered that small house.

This was not just a house. It was a shelter. An unknown world where she had to learn to live without hiding, to sleep without fear, to think without censorship. Often changing homes, and perhaps for the first time in years, imagining a future that began not with fear, but with possibility.Inside, she found a table with food, entry keys, a new American phone, and an envelope inscribed:

"Home is where calm and love meet."

She laughed for the first time in a long while. The laughter came naturally—light, simple, effortless.The Interview That Shook America
A week later, after settling in, the call came:"Ms. Elira, NBC News requests an exclusive interview. The program is Global Frontline Tonight, hosted by the renowned journalist Michael Abrams. Are you ready?"

Elira closed her eyes for a moment—not to hide, but to gather the fragments of herself scattered among fear, memory, and exhaustion. In that brief silence, all she had left behind passed like shadows: the muted voices, familiar streets, impossible choices, and the price of each one.When she opened her eyes again, her breath steadied. There was no room for doubt. Fear had not disappeared, but it no longer ruled. It was there—as a reminder of danger, not as an obstacle to truth.
It was time to speak.
Not to save herself—she had already done that—but to give voice to those who never could, to break the circle of silence fueled by fear, to turn truth from a personal burden into a collective responsibility.

In that moment, words were no longer just words. They were an act. A boundary drawn between past and future. And Elira knew: once she spoke, the shadows would lose their power.

NBC Washington Studio
The studio was cold, professional, filled with cameras, lights, and a team that treated her with full respect. The journalist extended his hand:
—"You don't have to be afraid anymore. Just tell your truth."
And she began…
The Road to Rescue — Testimony on Television
The strongest part of the interview was when she recounted the moment in Tirana, the day she sought help:
—"I was being followed. Threatened. I was alone. My lawyer tried to help, but he himself came under pressure. The Albanian police did not take me seriously—or could not, or would not. That night, I decided to go to the American Embassy."
She continued:

—"I went inside, eyes red from fear. A Marine said just one sentence: 'You are safe now. Sit down.' That is where my rescue began. The paperwork was processed within hours. The Albanian police could no longer find me. They transported me in a diplomatic vehicle to the airport, under their protection."
She then described the last moment before the plane:
—"As I sat in my seat, a female officer said: 'Look forward, not back.' That sentence helped me survive."
At the end of the interview, the studio fell silent.
Michael Abrams said:
—"This is one of the most powerful testimonies we have

ever heard on this program."
The Diplomatic Shockwave After Elira's Interview
The NBC interview, broadcast on Global Frontline Tonight, was more than a personal account. It became an international shockwave, a chain reaction no one anticipated. Within hours, Elira's name traveled from Washington to Brussels, from New York to Tirana.

12 Million Views Within 24 Hours
NBC's streaming platform reported:12.3 million views in the first 24 hours
300,000 comments
#VoiceOfElira
#ShadowsofTirana
For some, it was shocking; for others, inspiring; for others, painful—but no one was indifferent.

American critics called it "the most shocking testimony from the Balkans since the 1990s."
Immediate U.S. State Department Response
Two hours after the broadcast, the U.S. State Department published a brief, firm statement on its official page:
"The United States is closely monitoring the case of Albanian citizen Elira D…, who has requested protection due to serious threats and..." Threats to Her Life
The U.S. administration is working with international partners to ensure her safety and assess the situation on the ground.
The statement was broadcast by CNN, BBC, Reuters, and

AFP. Overnight, the case became a diplomatic dossier.
European Commission Calls for Urgent Investigation
Brussels responded only after several hours—a measured delay, typical of European mechanisms, where every word is weighed and every sentence carefully constructed. But in this case, the silence did not go unnoticed. The first pause was read as a period of verification; the reaction that followed signaled that the matter had gone beyond an individual case.

At the European Commission's daily press briefing, the spokesperson addressed reporters with a brief but direct statement:
—"We have received detailed information on Elira's case and are immediately seeking full explanations, as well as an independent investigation by Albanian authorities. The safety of citizens and respect for fundamental rights remain a core priority for the European Union."
The tone was cold, institutional, but between the lines, deep concern was clear. The phrase "independent investigation" was emphasized more than once—a formulation that, in Brussels' diplomatic language, implies distrust of internal mechanisms and a demand for real transparency.European journalists did not treat the case as isolated. In subsequent analysis and commentary, it was directly compared to:
Repeated issues regarding protection of journalists and whistleblowers in Western Balkan countries
Ongoing reports on institutional corruption and political interference in regional justice systems

Open EU monitoring files on Albania, where rule of law and individual security remain fragile points

In some international media, Elira's case was described as a "test of credibility" for Albanian authorities and as tangible proof of how far promises were from reality on the ground. Diplomatic sources in Brussels confirmed that, beyond public statements, the possibility of forming an international investigative commission was being considered—a rare, though not unprecedented, step typically taken when there are serious doubts about systemic failure and lack of institutional will for impartial inquiry.
In the corridors of the Commission, the matter was no longer spoken of simply as "Elira's case." It was becoming a symbol: a reflection of the tension between European aspirations and the political reality on the ground. And as Brussels sought answers, the question lingering in the air was simple but heavy:
Would this be a moment of truth, or just another file archived with careful language and minimal action?
Washington, The City of Cold Light
Washington greeted Elira with its own rigid calm—a city never impressed, but rewarding to those who approach with integrity. She stepped out of the federal vehicle onto the quiet streets of Georgetown, where red-brick houses looked as if lifted from a British film.

The house was warm, perfectly furnished with minimalist American taste: a white sofa, an open bookshelf, a large glass

table occupying nearly an entire wall, and beyond it, the Potomac flowed calmly, a silver ribbon under the evening light. Its quiet current seemed to erase her memories, wash away years of silence, and hold the promise of a new beginning. Yet for Elira, the river's silence could not erase the past.

On the table lay a letter, written in calm, precise handwriting: "Welcome home, Miss Elira. You are under full protection." She took the letter, slowly crumpling it in her hands, feeling the weight of the words. It was not distrust of protection—but an instinctive check, a habit not so easily dismissed. Security was not something written on paper; it had to be felt, tested, experienced.On her first night, Elira did not sleep. She needed no external noise; her thoughts, memories, and the possibilities ahead created an internal hum that filled the room. The Potomac flowed quietly outside, but inside her, time moved slowly, full of fear, anticipation, and a promise that had to be earned: freedom did not come immediately, but gradually, night by night.

Her thoughts drifted to Dr. Arben. She had loved him without realizing it—quiet, forbidden, fragile love. He had always seemed strong, wise, irreplaceable—until the day his world collapsed, until paranoia took everything from him.

"Arben… why?" she whispered, her voice dissolving into the ceiling of the unfamiliar home. The words hung lightly in the air, fragile as beings unsure where to settle. Every corner seemed to echo the past, yet there was no trace of him, no answer to hold the pain in place. Instead of a familiar

voice, she heard only the distant hum of planes above the city. Their sound was mechanical, indifferent—but to Elira, it felt like a cold response from the world: a world that kept moving, regardless of the wounds left behind.She sat at the edge of the room, hands tightly clasped on her knees. Every breath brought memories, every step left a shadow on the walls of the house. She silently asked herself: Was there truly an answer that could ease the emptiness inside? Or would every question remain unseen, while the city outside—planes humming, lights spreading over the river—continued indifferent to what she felt?

The silence was complete. But perhaps, for the first time in years, she understood that some questions do not require answers. Some are simply a desire to be heard, to confront loneliness, and to accept that pain can exist even in the safest places.

The Beginning on Television – The Voice of a Woman Who Will Not Be Silent

Two weeks later, Catherine Miller from the State Department escorted her to a television studio near Massachusetts Avenue—a place where heavy traffic and distant sirens created an almost hypnotic rhythm. Walking down corridors with large windows overlooking narrow sidewalks, Elira felt a mixture of nervousness and curiosity, trying to read the signs of the studio and the network of cables surrounding her like a mysterious web.

A program director awaited her—a sharp-eyed woman with gray hair, who seemed to have seen and judged more than any single television recording could capture. She

looked at her closely, with a quiet intensity, as if measuring every particle of her expression.
—"You have a story, a painful story," she said, her voice calm but firm. Then she added:—"But more than that: you have a unique voice. You will be part of our morning show—political analysis, personal stories, international issues. I know you can handle it." —"You have a story, a painful story," she said, her voice calm but firm. Then she continued—"But more than that: you have a unique voice. You will be part of our morning show. Political analysis, personal stories, international issues. I know you can handle it."
A hidden challenge, and a faint pulse of fear, mixed with excitement. She raised her eyebrows, feeling a sudden wave of power and responsibility settle on her shoulders. The studio surrounded her with cold calm, yet in its tense air, she sensed energy that could become something great—something that could change the course of the story she was about to tell.
—"Me? Political analysis?"
—"Yes. Because you don't just speak for yourself. You speak for a whole country."

And so her career on television began. First, with short reports, then interviews, and eventually major debates. Within months, her name became known in Washington, New York, Boston. The Weight of Collective Pain, Words Carefully Chosen

But she didn't know how to speak for herself.
Morning had just broken over Washington—soft, gray, calm, like a city waking slowly, without rush or noise, as if afraid to disturb its own quiet. Elira stood by the large window of her Washington home. After being moved several times, she had been placed in a quiet neighborhood with tall trees, carefully paved streets, and colonial-style houses that seemed to belong to another time. The sky hung low over the city, and the wind brushed gently against the leaves, creating a continuous, almost soothing murmur.
The house had been provided by the State Department. A modern home, minimal furnishings, lots of light, little color. Nothing excessive, nothing personal. A clean, orderly space, carrying that American sense of calm that didn't overwhelm you, but wrapped around you like a thin fog, reminding you that you were a guest.
Elira prepared a cup of coffee. The soft hum of the coffee machine was the only sound that broke the morning stillness. Even far from her homeland, the ritual hadn't changed. The coffee was the last bridge to her former self. She sat at the white wooden table, warming her hands around the cup, watching the steam rise slowly, as if carrying her thoughts upward.
For a moment, everything was still. Then…

A knock at the door. A light, restrained, professional knock. Elira raised her eyes, as if summoned from another reality.
—"Elira, are you awake?"
It was the voice of her security officer, Samantha Roach.

Clear, calm, emotionless—a voice that didn't ask, it simply stated.
Elira took a deep breath, set the cup on the table, and stood. She knew the day had begun, and with it, the role she had to play.with ice-blue eyes and a professional smile that never faltered.
—"Yes, I'm awake," Elira said, opening the door.
Samantha entered, tablet in hand.
—"Today you have the television segment. We need to leave in half an hour. NBC requested a second segment for you. Your article in Le Monde has attracted a lot of interest."
Elira smiled faintly—a reserved, delicate smile—but her eyes remained sad, heavy with a fatigue only time could soften.

—"I know," she said, her voice calm but tinged with worry. "I just hope it doesn't turn into a media circus. I simply told what I saw."
Samantha studied her for a long moment with an unusual softness rarely seen on her face. Calm eyes that seemed to understand more than words could express.
—"You're doing the right thing," she said, her voice warm yet firm. "It takes courage. It's not easy to stay true when the whole world seems ready to translate your story on its own terms."
Elira felt a small relief, a soft light in the midst of inner darkness—a silent but powerful approval, giving her the strength to continue telling the truth despite fear and consequences.

Washington Streets

The car moved slowly through the elegant neighborhoods. Elira observed: clean sidewalks, tall trees, cyclists in white helmets, dogs strolling as part of the family. Then the city suddenly opened its horizon: the white federal buildings, the Capitol dome glistening in the morning light, the Washington Monument rising like a white blade toward the sky.

—"Birds in cages don't fly… and they don't sing."

His face faded into a colorless darkness.

—"Every time I see this city, it feels like a movie," Elira said, glancing at the panorama of lights illuminating Washington at night. The palaces, the long streets, the car lights—they looked like scenes from a brilliant yet distant film.

Samantha laughed softly, a warm sound contrasting the night's silence.

—"Sometimes even we who live here feel like we're walking on a film set," she said, giving a calm, confident smile.

But Elira's heart was elsewhere. Her eyes rested on the large window, reflecting the city lights, while her mind lingered on someone else—Arben, on memories she could not escape, on the pain that still bound her to him.

For a moment, she closed her eyes. A wave of memories struck like unexpected winds. She saw Arben in that small psychiatric hospital room, the dim lamp casting long shadows across sterile walls. His tired eyes, heavy with deep and unclear sorrow, looked at her with a mix of

despair and silent love. The last words he had spoken in her dream still echoed in her memory.

When she opened her eyes, the city of Washington looked just as beautiful and luminous—but her heart was torn between the lights she saw and the shadow of him she could never forget.
She knew she had loved him. Not with the fiery passion of a young girl, but with the depth of a woman who, for the first time, had found in someone another world: wiser, more compassionate, more sorrowful.
But her love was broken, snapped like a dry branch.
Television – Workday
The studio was cold, flooded with light. Cameramen moved quickly, producers spoke into headsets, and the famous NBC journalist Megan Price approached with a confident smile.
—"Elira, are we ready? Your first segment had 12 million views. You're national news now."
Elira lowered her head, as if embarrassed.
—"I never wanted to be news," she said quietly, her calm voice holding a tremor inside.
Megan looked her straight in the eyes.
—"You are the voice that was missing."
The interview began. The lights came on. But the moment questions started, Elira no longer noticed the light, the camera, or the eyes of millions watching. She simply spoke. Spoke of Tirana. The events there. The night everything turned to hell. The police. The escape. The American embassy. Arben.

And it all came out as a strong, calm, precise testimony—a kind of emotional surgery.
American journalists described her as:
"The voice that brings the Balkans to the screen with brutal honesty""The analyst who wears no mask"
"The new face of an old world"In every interview, she spoke about Albania—its wounds, its dreams, the dark year of 1997.
—"My Albania has been held hostage by chaos and gangs, but its people deserve more," she often said. "1997 is not over for us."
Every time she said that, her heart quivered slightly. She knew Arben had been one of the victims of that dark history—even years later, fear still had roots.The Success That Follows, and the Never-Ending Surveillance

With success came a new danger—subtle, invisible, far more insidious than any physical threat she had faced before. U.S. authorities never left her alone; their presence was always felt, like a shadow following each of her steps. Around the house, every small detail was monitored. Hidden cameras were placed in corners of walls and trees, recording every movement. Civilian patrols passed regularly, like the silent heartbeat of the city. Repeated inspections tested every door, every hidden fear. Even a car remained permanently parked on the narrow street across the door, a faceless body watching, silent, attentive to every gesture, every conversation.Every step inside the house, every step outside, fell under the shadow of this

surveillance. She stood in her room, feeling the invisible pressure of unknown eyes that never rested, realizing that her new freedom came with hidden constraints. Success that shone in public light had brought with it a network of constant, fearsome observation.
Catherine watched her closely, with the calm of someone who had seen many complex situations. Then she spoke plainly:
—"We don't have conclusions yet on your case. Caution is required. Someone from Albania is still looking for you. Still."

The word "still" hit Elira like a slow bullet, forcing her to feel the weight of the danger surrounding her. Yet her smile was bitter, filled with irony and a deep hint of resistance.
—"My life has turned into a spy movie," she said, her voice fractured, just barely touched with dark humor.
Catherine leaned closer, placing a hand on her shoulder with a warmth that could not be hidden by protocol.
—"It will pass," she said calmly. "For now, you must stay under protection."
Elira felt a strange sensation: security and restriction intertwined, like two sides of the same coin. Every step, every breath, would now be observed; every movement recorded, every word overheard. But beneath that weight, a part of her felt a new strength—a knowledge that she could endure anything, even when her life had taken the shape of a spy novel.

She accepted it, though deep inside, she was afraid—not for herself, but for the memories, for Arben.A Love That Doesn't Die Even When Destroyed

Every time American society drove her in a taxi to the television studio, her mind drifted to the days when Arben was still calm. Still a doctor. Still that wise man who gave her a sense of security, who spoke with a soft voice, who read books and explained the world with rare logic.
Then illness crept in like black smoke, spreading slowly through every corner of his soul: fear, paranoia, an invisible but inescapable sensation that gripped him and denied him breath.
One night, in a dream, when Elira entered his room at the psychiatric hospital, the dim lamp light against the sterile walls cast long, strange shadows. He looked at her with lost eyes and, in a trembling voice, said:
—"Birds in cages no longer fly or sing, Elira. Neither can I. Leave. Save yourself."His words cut through her like a knife. She left the room, eyes brimming with tears, her heart shattered. The tears flowed endlessly, but there was no other way. She had to go. He was right; his salvation was impossible, and she could not carry the burden of his pain.

He was gone; only a memory remained. Yet in the quiet evenings of Washington, as she looked out over the city from her large window, she felt his presence like a soft shadow, a memory that never left, even though he was no

longer there. The city lights reflected frozen stars, mirroring a loss she could never forget.

—"Arben, why didn't I have the strength to save you?" she whispered in silence, praying for an answer that never came, as a deep, quiet sorrow filled the room.
But she knew: love alone cannot confront madness, nor the system, nor fear.
New Life and Old Shadows
On screen, she was a strong, beautiful, composed woman. Her words lined up steadily, her voice full of weight and confidence, commanding the audience's attention. The public loved her because she spoke with the language of justice, contained pain, and measured hope.
But at night… at night, when the city lights went out one by one and the world's noise stayed behind closed glass, Elira was just a woman. A woman who had lost the person she loved and who, every evening, struggled to rebuild herself over an emptiness that would not close. A woman living among memories and silence, learning slowly how to ignite a new life in a foreign world where nothing knew her real name.
She knew how to speak for Albania. She knew its history, its wounds, its injustices, and its unfinished hopes. She knew how to articulate…The Weight of Collective Pain, Words Carefully Chosen
But she didn't know how to speak for herself.
Morning had just broken over Washington—soft, gray, calm, like a city waking slowly, without rush or noise, as if afraid to disturb its own quiet. Elira stood by the large

window of her Washington home. After being moved several times, she had been placed in a quiet neighborhood with tall trees, carefully paved streets, and colonial-style houses that seemed to belong to another time. The sky hung low over the city, and the wind brushed gently against the leaves, creating a continuous, almost soothing murmur.

The house had been provided by the State Department. A modern home, minimal furnishings, lots of light, little color. Nothing excessive, nothing personal. A clean, orderly space, carrying that American sense of calm that didn't overwhelm you, but wrapped around you like a thin fog, reminding you that you were a guest.
Elira prepared a cup of coffee. The soft hum of the coffee machine was the only sound that broke the morning stillness. Even far from her homeland, the ritual hadn't changed. The coffee was the last bridge to her former self. She sat at the white wooden table, warming her hands around the cup, watching the steam rise slowly, as if carrying her thoughts upward.
For a moment, everything was still. Then…
A knock at the door. A light, restrained, professional knock. Elira raised her eyes, as if summoned from another reality.
—"Elira, are you awake?"It was the voice of her security officer, Samantha Roach. Clear, calm, emotionless—a voice that didn't ask, it simply stated.Elira took a deep breath, set the cup on the table, and stood. She knew the day had begun, and with it, the role she had to play.

Samantha was impeccably professional. A woman in her early forties, with ice-blue eyes and a professional smile that never faltered.
—"Yes, I'm awake," Elira said, opening the door.
Samantha entered, tablet in hand.
—"Today you have the television segment. We need to leave in half an hour. NBC requested a second segment for you. Your article in Le Monde has attracted a lot of interest."
Elira smiled faintly—a reserved, delicate smile—but her eyes remained sad, heavy with a fatigue only time could soften.
—"I know," she said, her voice calm but tinged with worry. "I just hope it doesn't turn into a media circus. I simply told what I saw."
Samantha studied her for a long moment with an unusual softness rarely seen on her face. Calm eyes that seemed to understand more than words could express.
—"You're doing the right thing," she said, her voice warm yet firm. "It takes courage. It's not easy to stay true when the whole world seems ready to translate your story on its own terms."

Elira felt a small relief, a soft light in the midst of inner darkness—a silent but powerful approval, giving her the strength to continue telling the truth despite fear and consequences.
Washington Streets
The car moved slowly through the elegant neighborhoods. Elira observed: clean sidewalks, tall trees, cyclists in white

helmets, dogs strolling as part of the family. Then the city suddenly opened its horizon: the white federal buildings, the Capitol dome glistening in the morning light, the Washington Monument rising like a white blade toward the sky.
—"Birds in cages don't fly… and they don't sing."His face faded into a colorless darkness.
—"Every time I see this city, it feels like a movie," Elira said, glancing at the panorama of lights illuminating Washington at night. The palaces, the long streets, the car lights—they looked like scenes from a brilliant yet distant film.

Samantha laughed softly, a warm sound contrasting the night's silence.

—"Sometimes even we who live here feel like we're walking on a film set," she said, giving a calm, confident smile.
But Elira's heart was elsewhere. Her eyes rested on the large window, reflecting the city lights, while her mind lingered on someone else—Arben, on memories she could not escape, on the pain that still bound her to him.
For a moment, she closed her eyes. A wave of memories struck like unexpected winds. She saw Arben in that small psychiatric hospital room, the dim lamp casting long shadows across sterile walls. His tired eyes, heavy with deep and unclear sorrow, looked at her with a mix of despair and silent love. The last words he had spoken in her dream still echoed in her memory.

When she opened her eyes, the city of Washington looked just as beautiful and luminous—but her heart was torn between the lights she saw and the shadow of him she could never forget.
She knew she had loved him. Not with the fiery passion of a young girl, but with the depth of a woman who, for the first time, had found in someone another world: wiser, more compassionate, more sorrowful.
But her love was broken, snapped like a dry branch.
Television – Workday

The studio was cold, flooded with light. Cameramen moved quickly, producers spoke into headsets, and the famous NBC journalist Megan Price approached with a confident smile.
—"Elira, are we ready? Your first segment had 12 million views. You're national news now."
Elira lowered her head, as if embarrassed.
—"I never wanted to be news," she said quietly, her calm voice holding a tremor inside.
Megan looked her straight in the eyes.
—"You are the voice that was missing."
The interview began. The lights came on. But the moment questions started, Elira no longer noticed the light, the camera, or the eyes of millions watching. She simply spoke. Spoke of Tirana. The events there. The night everything turned to hell. The police. The escape. The American embassy. Arben.
And it all came out as a strong, calm, precise testimony—a

kind of emotional surgery.
Moments After the Interview
When the interview ended, Samantha placed a hand on her shoulder.
—"Today you changed something. Maybe a lot."
—"Maybe," said Elira, tired.
A young lighting technician approached, a man in his twenties with dark, slightly curly hair and bright, alert eyes reflecting an unexpected warmth. His simple clothing—black jacket, dark pants—could not hide the emotion in every careful gesture. "I'm from Tirana," he said in a low voice, almost trembling with emotion. "I want to thank you. For the first time, someone is speaking about us the right way."
His words touched something deep inside Elira. A warm, unexpected wave of gratitude swept through her spirit. Her heart, weary from the pain and tension of recent days, felt a small relief.

—"Thank you," she said, giving him a calm, heartfelt look. "I'm just a person. A person who couldn't stay silent anymore."

The young man smiled lightly, an innocent, warm sound that broke the noisy silence of the studio. For a brief moment, they both felt the quiet connection shared by people who endure the same pain and the same sense of helplessness in the face of injustice.
Outside, the city lights reflected on the large window. Inside,

a small moment of human kindness and understanding gave Elira new breath—a reminder that even in the middle of chaos, people could find each other.

Evening at Home

Evening fell gently over Washington, the city lights slowly illuminating the streets like artificial stars scattered across a quiet sky. Outside, a soft, rare rain slid down the large windowpane, creating a gentle, monotone music that stirred a feeling of melancholy in her heart.

Elira lit a candle by the window. Its flame flickered lightly, casting shadows across the blue armchair where she sat. A sudden, strong, painful longing washed over her, mixing bitter memories with nostalgia for a life she could no longer have. Hands trembling slightly, she picked up a notebook and began to write, letting the words flow like an inner storm:

"I am here. But my heart stayed there, in a red city, among shadows and noise. I want to live… but I don't know what to do with the memories."

Her eyes filled with tears, reflecting the candlelight and the city glow. She felt a bittersweet pain climb into her soul—a mix of loss and hope. That night, for the first time in a long while, Elira fell asleep feeling as if she were starting a new life. Yet in the silence of the room and the rhythm of rain on the window, she knew that a part of her—her most sensitive part, the one always tied to memories and lost love—would remain forever with Arben.

The New City

Washington that morning looked pristine, like a freshly blank sheet of paper. The gray sky, streaked with faint blue, hung like a curtain slowly drifting over federal buildings with domes, wide streets, and sidewalks where morning joggers passed in rhythmic steps.

Elira stepped out onto the balcony with a warm cup of tea. Her long, dark chestnut hair waved gently in the morning breeze. She wore a light gray sweater and black pants—a natural, elegant simplicity. Her face carried a fragile calm, but her eyes looked tired, still adjusting to shadows.

Below, the quiet street of her neighborhood buzzed softly: a police car rolling slowly on its daytime patrol, a woman walking her dog, a mail carrier carefully placing envelopes in metal boxes. She had started to recognize the faces of the residents, but she still didn't feel part of this world.

Television Offices

At the television newsroom where she worked on the segment "Stories of Freedom", everyone had been struck by the speed and precision with which she wrote her first articles. It was more than professionalism; her articles carried an inner life, a hidden sense of perception that drew attention and made people feel as if they were seeing the world through someone who had seen more than most.

One day, as she carefully reviewed the final drafts of a segment, her producer, Laura Grant—a short woman with short gray-streaked hair and sharp eyes, as if they were

telescopes into her thoughts—approached. Her voice was calm but full of certainty:
—"Elira, you have a voice that's been missing in the media. Do you feel that?"
Elira lifted her head from the laptop, her eyes slightly brightened by the sunlight streaming through the newsroom's large window. It was a question that required more than a superficial answer.

—"Maybe…" she said, her fingers gliding carefully over the keyboard, "Or maybe I'm just someone who has seen things I shouldn't have."
Laura smiled, a small, measured smile, as if weighing the weight of every word she would say.
—"Here," she said, sliding a half-finished piece of paper across the desk, "we've all seen something. But not all of us have the courage to speak up. You do."
The newsroom hummed with the sound of monitors, graphics changing color, news scrolling on side screens, notifications arriving without pause. But Elira often paused for a moment, gazing out the large window. The avenues sparkled in the morning sun like glass; American flags waved tirelessly in the wind; tourists photographed the monuments, capturing moments that would never return. It was a world that seemed calm, yet Elira knew a stronger, more dangerous rhythm hid beneath this stillness.
Surveillance
American security officers followed her everywhere. At first, it was unsettling; every step, every breath seemed watched

by invisible eyes. She didn't feel free. But over time, she learned to live with this constant presence, understanding it was part of a silent system that protected her life.
At the entrance of the television building, a tall man always stood, dark glasses reflecting the morning light, a black tablet clutched tightly in his hand. He always greeted her in the same calm, clipped tone:
—"Good morning, Miss K."
—"Good morning," she replied every time, with a light smile that maintained distance and respect.
She never learned his real name. But she felt strongly that he, and others like him, had a secret and important duty: to keep her alive. What fears, threats, or dangers lay behind them, Elira never asked. It was an unseen mystery that preserved a part of her safety, and she accepted this silence as part of the new life she was trying to build. And so, as the city slowly settled into its daily rhythm, she learned to walk between the bright lights of the studios and the shadows of invisible protectors, feeling both power and danger at once—two forces inseparably tied to her life.
Life in Washington

Every night she returned to her home. The house wasn't new, but it was a dream home, as any home is to someone getting their first apartment. It was bright, quiet, with a small library and a veranda opening onto a green garden.
But for Elira, it was only a temporary place. In the evenings, she would light a small lamp by the window and read American books—from Hemingway to Joan Didion, from

Toni Morrison to old issues of The Washington Post. Often, she would share her thoughts with herself during those quiet moments when the newsroom's noise faded for a few seconds and the city seemed to breathe with her.
"Once I thought I'd live in a small town in Albania… A simple house, streets I knew with my eyes closed, faces greeting me by name. Life would be limited but familiar, predictable."
Now she was here, in the heart of Washington, among majestic buildings, lights that never went out, and a language that still sounded like a daily test. A city that gave everything yet demanded even more in return.
"But who am I here?" she asked herself. A journalist among hundreds? An immigrant speaking of freedom while still learning how to live with it? Or a foreign voice trying to find its place in a loud, merciless chorus? Sometimes it felt like she lived between two worlds: one that had shaped her, and another that was changing her without asking.

Albania came to her mind like a warm but painful memory, while Washington stood as a constant challenge, cold and brilliant at the same time. She understood she was no longer the girl who had simply dreamed of a quiet life—but she wasn't yet fully the woman she wanted to become. And in that uncertain space between past and present, between what she had lost and what she was building, Elira continued to move forward, seeking the answer to the question that always returned: Who am I, here and now?
Washington Sequence

One rainy day, as she walked toward Union Station, a man in a hood approached quietly.
—"Are you… Elira?"
She was surprised but kept calm.
—"Yes," she said. His voice trembled, but he spoke clearly:
—"I've been following you on NBC… Your article opened my eyes. I'm from the Balkans too. We need to talk… someday, when you're ready."

He spoke no more and disappeared into the crowd like a sudden downpour.
Elira's body stiffened. Samantha, walking a few paces behind, immediately turned.
—"What happened? Who was that?"
—"I don't know," Elira said. "Just someone who recognized me."
Samantha's face tightened. She looked at her with professional focus.
—"We'll increase security measures. That's it."
Quiet Success
Often, Elira shared her thoughts only with herself during those moments when the surrounding noise faded and she faced her inner silence. Short moments, but enough to look back.
"Once I thought I'd live in a small town in Albania…" she would tell herself. "A simple life, narrow streets I knew with my eyes closed, people greeting me by name, days flowing without hurry."

It had been a modest, clear dream—a small certainty in an uncertain world. Now that life was here, in the heart of Washington, among towering buildings like monuments of power, among lights that never went out, and the unstoppable rhythm of a city that left no time to pause. A place that offered opportunity but demanded constant proof of oneself.

"But who am I here?" The question returned endlessly, sometimes as quiet doubt, sometimes as an inner calling. Sometimes she felt merely a journalist among many, lost in a large newsroom. Other times, an immigrant speaking of freedom, still learning to live with this life. There were moments she felt like a foreign voice trying to find its place in a strong, unforgiving chorus.

She lived between two worlds: one had shaped her, the other changed her without asking. Albania appeared as a warm memory, filled with scars, while Washington shone as a cold, brilliant challenge. Neither fully held her—but both called to her.

She understood she was no longer the girl who only dreamed of peace. But she was not yet the woman she wanted to become. And in that unclear space between past and present, between loss and building, Elira continued walking—

Seeking not only her place in the world but also the true name of herself. Learning to respond to dreams, disappointments… and, in the midst of it all, even threats.

Suddenly, a short email appeared on her screen. Voices

from the past never truly left, like a distant echo of a curse: "Don't speak of Albania anymore. We know where you live."

The words were cold, threatening, written with precision that left no room for doubt. A wave of tension and sorrow filled the air.

Samantha picked up the phone, staring at the email for a few seconds with a calm but determined face, weighing the message's weight.

—"From today, you won't move alone anymore," she said quietly, each word carrying the weight of a final decision.

Elira felt a slight shiver in her soul, a mix of fear and relief. She was no longer alone in this network of threats and surveillance. But the threat was still there, hidden, present, and the sense of uncertainty remained heavy on her shoulders.

A Quiet Moment

That evening, Elira sat on the veranda, away from the city's lingering pulse. The air was fresh, with that rare quiet only Washington offers after midnight, when the lights stay on but people retreat into their shadows. A warm cup of tea sat nearby, untouched; her thoughts moved faster than her hands.

Washington gleamed in the distance—the silhouette of St. John's Cathedral rising majestically in the darkness, Georgetown's buildings glowing with quiet beauty, and the Potomac lights shifting slowly like small stars fallen onto water. The city seemed beautiful yet unattainable, as if observing her from afar without judgment.

She leaned back in her chair, feeling the cold wood behind her, closing her eyes. For the first time in a long while, her mind did not race toward fear, nor toward the past that shadowed her. She allowed herself only the rhythm of night, the calm breath, and the lights pulsing beyond her closed eyes.

"Here begins my second life," she whispered silently, but with a conviction she had never felt before. It was not a grand promise, nor a heroic declaration. It was a simple, sincere acceptance, matured by losses and long journeys. "And this time… I will not be afraid."

The words melted into the night air, unnoticed, yet heavy with meaning. Elira knew that fear never truly disappears; one only learns not to let it rule one's life. And as she stood there, between the city lights and the silence within, she felt something rare: not loud happiness, but peace. Fragile, yet real—a peace strong enough to keep moving forward.

Her Fame in the U.S.

Fame did not arrive as a single wave. It came like a quiet storm, starting with a whisper in the press, then a morning interview, then evening analyses—until suddenly, it became real: Elira's name was being mentioned across the country. In every TV studio. On every portal. On every serious political podcast.

She became a symbol of immigrant women's courage, a voice denouncing state violence, and simultaneously, a figure that sparked fierce debate. Every appearance was both a challenge and a clear message.

Good Morning America Studio

The studio lights in New York were so bright that for a moment, Elira felt breathless. Their reflection on stage gave everything a cold, almost overwhelming shine. The audience began applauding as she entered, and she paused for a second, trying to process the sudden emotion. She was not used to this kind of public support.

The main host, Richard Hall—a man with graying hair and calm, commanding TV presence—approached with a warm smile. His gray suit matched his professional composure, yet his eyes held the curiosity of someone who had witnessed many great stories.

Elira entered the studio dressed simply, yet elegantly: a white long-sleeved blouse, carefully tailored, and dark straight trousers giving her a clean, serious silhouette. Black socks and low-heeled shoes made her feel steady and confident in every step. Her hair was loosely tied back, with a few strands framing her face, lending softness and naturalness. Her deep, slightly weary eyes reflected the harsh studio lights and the emotion of the moment.

As she walked toward the stage, her simple outfit made her look serious and determined, yet her slight smile and careful movements radiated warmth to the audience. Every detail of her attire was deliberate: to appear respectable, yet approachable and relatable.

When she stopped before the microphones and the audience, the lights reflected off Richard Hall's glasses and her hair, making her appear calm yet powerful, ready to share her story and capture the viewers' hearts.—"Ms. E., America is talking a lot about you," he said, offering

his hand. Her hand met his with a feeling of warmth and seriousness, a mixture of respect and curiosity.
—"I don't know if I deserve all this attention," Elira replied with a light smile and bright eyes.
Richard Hall smiled, brushing his shoulder lightly against hers, helping her feel calmer under the bright stage lights.—"It's not about merit, Ms. E.," he said, looking at her with admiration. "It's your courage that drew everyone's attention. People want to hear your story—not just the usual news."
Elira took a deep breath and scanned the applauding audience. A strange sensation ran through her body: fear, happiness, and a sudden responsibility to represent not only herself but those who could not speak—"Then," she said, focusing on the microphones, "I will do what I can. Because everyone's voice matters."

The audience erupted in applause. Richard Hall looked at her for a moment, acknowledging the seriousness and calm she carried in every word, then returned his warm, confident smile, with a hidden spark of determination in his eyes.
The audience fell silent for a moment as the cameras focused on her face. Richard added a warmer tone:
—"I don't say this lightly. You've told your story with courage… and people are listening. How does it feel to stand here right now?"
Elira inhaled deeply and spoke, her voice slightly trembling:
—"It's strange… at once fear and freedom. People see me

calm here, but my story… is bigger than this studio."
Richard smiled and glanced at the cameras:
—"Now, Ms. E., what do you hope to achieve by sharing this story?"Elira stepped closer to the microphone and answered firmly:

—"I hope people understand that every voice matters. I'm not here for myself alone… I'm here for all those who cannot speak."
The audience applauded again. A warm feeling filled Elira's heart; for a moment, fear faded, replaced by the power of a simple but profound message: speaking the truth is never in vain.
—"You've told a story that many would not have dared to tell. And you've sparked a conversation that no one else had touched before," said Richard, lowering his gaze briefly, as if waiting for her reaction.
Elira brushed her hair instinctively, seeking balance before speaking. Her face held that striking, cool Balkan beauty that immediately impressed Americans: defined features, large eyes that seemed to contain untold stories, and a quiet, magnetic sadness that drew attention without demanding it.
The studio lights shone mercilessly on her face, but she did not flinch. Her voice came out calm, clear, without tremor:
—"I believe the truth should not be afraid."
For a moment, there was silence. Then her words melted into applause—not polite, but immediate and sincere, showing that something had touched the audience. The show's producers exchanged quick, amazed glances: this

was the rare moment television dreams of—a sentence spoken at the right time, by the right person.

Media Portrait

After the broadcast, the echo of her words spread faster than Elira had imagined. The New York Times published a long article, accompanied by a profile photograph, titled: "Elira K.—The New Voice of Balkan Conscience in the U.S."

The article described her as a journalist carrying the weight of history and the scars of a troubled region, yet with the moral clarity of someone seeking meaning, not sensation. It highlighted her measured, direct speaking style and her ability to turn personal experience into a universal story.

The Atlantic went further, calling her:

"A quiet voice challenging the grand narratives of power."

Within weeks, Elira's name appeared not only in newsrooms but also on discussion panels, conferences, and public debates. To the public, she was a new moral figure. To the media, a powerful story. For Elira herself, everything was happening too fast—and she sensed that hidden within this recognition was a silent risk: the louder the voice, the greater the shadow that followed.

"The most surprising media sensation of the year." Analysts called it this, in their cold, statistical language, masking real upheaval. Within weeks, her name became a headline, the headline a brand, and the brand a public commodity bringing fame—and money.

Amazon Books soon listed sensational titles:

Who is Elira?

The Story that Changed Washington

The Courage of a Woman from AlbaniaAuthors who had never met her, publishers who knew nothing of her life, analysts reading only fragments—all wrote about her as if they knew her better than she knew herself. Her story was being stripped of context, fragmented, and repackaged to fit market demand.

Meanwhile, tabloids cared little for the truth. They thrived on surface details: what Elira wore, whom she spoke to in the studio corridors, where she sat after the show, why she lived alone, why she didn't always smile. Every step on the street became evidence.

Fame, Elira realized, had two faces: one noble, raising the voice of truth; the other poisonous, seeking to destroy the person behind it.

The New Pressure

One evening, as she returned from work, her phone rang in the exhausted silence of the street. It was Laura, the producer. —"It's time to talk seriously."

—"About what?" Elira asked, though she could feel the weight of what was coming.

—"You're a public figure now. You have to be careful with everything you say, everything you post, every move you make. You will have opponents. You will have people who don't like you. Fame in the U.S. is a beast.Elira stopped by the cold wall of her apartment hallway. The dim lights fell across her face like invisible spotlights.

—"I know… but I'm not an artist. I'm a journalist."

Her voice was calm but tired.On the other end of the line, there was a brief pause. Then Laura spoke sharply:
—"I don't care what you are. You're a symbol now."

The word symbol sank into her chest like a heavy weight. Symbols don't cry. Symbols don't get tired. Symbols are not allowed to make mistakes.
And for the first time, Elira realized that the greatest danger wasn't the enemy attacking her openly, but the fame that stripped her of the right to be simply human.
In the silence of the corridor, she felt fear rise—not for her own life, but for the truth that risked being lost among the applause.
Facing the Public
At a major event at Georgetown University, the auditorium was packed. Students, professors, journalists, and activists filled every seat, even the side corridors. The air was thick with anticipation—that collective feeling when the audience is waiting not just for a speech, but for a figure.
When Elira entered the room, the crowd stood. Applause erupted without warning, echoing off the high walls of the auditorium. For a moment, she froze, feeling a cold wave in her stomach, a silent warning that nothing was private anymore. She smiled lightly and walked to the podium, holding her posture straight, as if her calm were an invisible shield.

She spoke clearly, without exaggerated rhetoric, touching on subjects students usually encountered in theory but

rarely from someone who had lived them. The audience listened in silence, focused, as if every word carried weight. After the event, as people slowly dispersed, a young woman approached her. She held a notebook, her eyes filled with genuine curiosity.

—"Do you… enjoy the fame?" she asked. "Or is it a burden?"Elira paused for a moment. Her gaze slid over the now half-empty room, over the rows of chairs that had been filled with voices moments ago.

—"At first, fame," she said, "pulls you in like the lights of a big city… but then it blinds you."

The young woman laughed softly, with an unconscious sort of respect.

—"I hope it doesn't blind you too much."

Elira smiled but said nothing. She knew that blindness doesn't always come suddenly; often, it creeps in slowly, in the name of applause.

The Face of Fame

At home, in her quiet room, Elira was often alone. Away from auditoriums, cameras, and the constant hum of public attention, she returned to who she really was: a woman with unspoken thoughts, questions without easy answers. The silence of the room was not empty; it held the weight of the day, the words spoken, and the ones left hanging.

The soft light of a burning candle cast long shadows across the bookshelves. Titles on philosophy, history, literature—books she once devoured with hunger, now leafed through without pause. The scent of wax filled the air with a sense

of impermanence, as if everything was destined to burn slowly and disappear, like the flame itself.
She turned the pages, but the words slid past her mind. Her thoughts kept returning to one persistent question, a question that increasingly accompanied her: Was fame a tool to tell the truth, or a new veil that covered it?In that silence, Elira understood that the public only saw part of her—the confident figure speaking without tremor, the clear voice that challenges, the woman who seemed never to hesitate. It was an image built from lights, headlines, and applause. But behind that public face was another, more fragile, still seeking balance between light and shadow, between the need to speak and the desire to remain silent.

She knew that fame doesn't always strike loudly; often, it wears you down slowly, strips away intimacy, and teaches you to live under invisible stares. And here, in this quiet solitude, away from the world's eyes, Elira felt the true weight of fame: not in applause, not in newspaper articles, but in silence—in moments when no one was watching, and she had to face herself alone.
—Who am I now?
In Washington, she was many things at once: a political figure, a courageous immigrant, a journalist, a human rights symbol, the mysterious Balkan woman with a dark past. Fame surrounded her like a ring of fire, casting both light and shadow over every step she took. Every media comment, every sensational headline, made her feel as if she were performing on a stage she couldn't leave, where

she had to keep performing.
But sometimes, she just wanted peace. One normal morning, without cameras following her every move, without police patrols, without interviews, without people measuring and judging her. Just her, a cup of coffee, and the reassuring quiet. Sunlight poured through her windows, and even the cold January air carried the aroma of freshly roasted coffee. For a few minutes, the world could break or survive, and she was simply herself.
Then came the offers.

One day, Samantha handed her a thick envelope, a promise that could change everything.
—"From Penguin Random House," she said, with a warm smile that couldn't hide her excitement.
Elira opened it carefully. It was an offer for an autobiographical book. Her heart beat a little faster; her finger touched the paper gently, as if it were fragile. Her mind immediately went to the questions that always accompanied her: Am I ready to tell everything? Will they understand me? Will they judge me? Every hidden memory, every hurt, every happy or painful moment lined up inside her like figures illuminated by an invisible spotlight.
The next day, another offer arrived—for a documentary. She covered her mouth with her hand and felt small for a moment in the face of such magnitude. It was a step into the unknown: if she did this, she would lose part of her private life, but perhaps she would help someone else, someone without a voice. Her thoughts flowed like waves:

Can I control my narrative? Will viewers understand me?
On the third day, a production company from Los Angeles offered to turn her story into a film. Elira sat in the pale studio chair, and the silence became heavy, almost unbearable. Laura, her assistant and trusted friend, spoke quietly but firmly:

—"This is the moment where everything changes. If you do this, your life will no longer be private. Whatever you've kept to yourself will now be for everyone. Whatever you've hidden will be seen, heard, and discussed."
Elira felt the weight of Laura's words like a wave washing over her and the shoreline. Part of her wanted to stay back, preserve the silence and calm of a simple morning. But another part felt a fire inside: the chance to tell her truth, to make her voice reach more people, to give hope to those who had no courage.
And for the first time, she asked herself in a quiet but determined voice:
—"Who am I now? Am I just a symbol, or can I be myself, even between the light and shadow that fame casts over me?"
Silence answered her for a few moments, but she knew: big choices leave no room for long doubts. Only actions show who you are.
—"If you want, you could be rich within a year."
Elira sat in her blue armchair, holding the envelope slowly in her hands. Silence filled the room as thoughts collided: Two years ago, I couldn't have imagined this. Now all of

America is talking about me… but what do I really want? Wealth? Fame? Or peace? I know my story matters, but… how much will my private life cost me?

She closed the envelope slowly, feeling the weight of the decision. Part of her was ready to tell everything, to save others through her story, but another part wanted to preserve the silence, the precious solitude that still gave her strength and peace.

—"It's not just a book," she whispered to herself. "It's my whole life that could be turned into a spectacle. Can I handle it?"

She sank a little, and for a moment, the quiet room and candlelight became a small bastion of peace, where she could hear only her own breath, thinking about every step yet to come. A step that would be decisive—for her and her career. — "What if I don't want to be rich? What if I just want to live?"

Laura laughed.

— "Then you came to the wrong place. America doesn't let you be 'just' anything."

The Turmoil Inside Her

One night, as she was walking home, rain poured violently, slamming onto the pavement and forming streams that hummed beneath her feet. Elira wasn't walking fast. Her coat's hood was pulled over her head as she moved slowly through the rain, lost in thought.

Because she felt something inside her changing.

She was no longer simply the unknown woman who had arrived from Albania. She had become someone else—a

version of herself that people now watched and judged. Someone weighed, evaluated, admired. Someone who was no longer free.
Fame is like a vast ocean, she thought, a slight tremor passing through her body.
It lifts you, dazzles you… but it can drown you just as quickly.
And then… the call.
The Call
One cold winter evening, while sipping tea on the veranda, Elira sat wrapped in a thin scarf, watching the city lights trembling in the darkness. The air was sharp, almost piercing, and the silence carried an unusual weight.

At that moment, her phone rang.
An unknown number.
Her heart tightened slightly. She picked up the phone with trembling fingers and tried to keep her voice steady.
— "Hello?"
From the other side came a cold, clipped, official voice— one that left no room for misunderstanding.
— "This is the State Department speaking."
Elira felt an immediate knot in her stomach. For a moment, her thoughts scattered.
— "Yes…" she finally said, her tone betraying a hint of tension.
— "Mrs. Miller… Elira," the voice continued, using her pseudonym,
"we need to meet immediately. There is information that

must be discussed in person. There is no time for delay."
The words fell one after another—dry, without explanation, without comfort.
The line stayed open for a brief moment, then disconnected.
Elira remained silent. The tea in her cup had gone cold, but she didn't notice.
Her first thought was fear—a deep instinct for self-protection, a sense that something was moving beyond her control. Images flashed through her mind: the articles, the speeches, the overwhelming attention, the shadows that fame brings with it.
But almost immediately, fear collided with something else. Responsibility.
A heavy, undeniable sense of duty rose inside her. She knew she had come this far precisely because she had refused to remain silent. And now silence was no longer an option.
She took a deep breath, stood up from the chair, and cast one last glance at the city shining coldly before her.

The lights no longer looked like stars.
Now they looked like eyes watching.
Elira realized this call was not simply a meeting.
It was a threshold.
And she had just crossed it.
Whatever this is… I can't turn away. This is my life now.
— "Where should I come?" she asked, forcing a steady breath, trying to remain calm.
— "State Department security personnel will meet you within an hour," the voice said.

"Bring only personal belongings. Stay calm, Mrs. Miller."
When she hung up, Elira sat back down in the veranda chair, feeling the weight of the moment.

The rain was still falling heavily outside, but now the drops seemed slower, as if time itself had paused to breathe.
Her heart was pounding, but determination was beginning to grow within her.
This is the moment when my life is no longer only mine. Whatever happens now, there is no turning back.
She pulled her hood over her head and, without hesitation, began walking again through the wet streets toward an unknown future that would change everything.
Later they told her:
— "We have received information that you have become a subject of interest to a foreign group. New security measures must be taken. Your fame is creating risk."
Elira lifted her head toward the night sky.
Fame had become her fate.And her prison.

"There is no reason for immediate concern," they told her. "But it is our duty to inform you and protect you from anything that may happen."
The Arrival of the American Journalist
Washington was burning under a sticky July heat when Elira saw him for the first time.
It was after a panel on human rights in a large university hall on Capitol Hill. She had just finished speaking—with her clear, firm tone, barely moving her hands—when the

audience rose to their feet in applause.
Among the shifting faces that moved like waves of color, a tall man wearing a light blue shirt and carrying a folder under his arm approached her slowly and carefully.
His hair was slightly disheveled, and in his blue eyes shone a mixture of curiosity and professional respect.
— "Elira D., right?"

She turned toward him, still a little tired from the spotlights and applause.
— "Yes," she said softly. "How can I help you?"
He extended his hand.
— "Michael Turner. Investigative journalist. The Washington Herald."
— "I've read your work," she said, shaking his hand carefully.
— "And I've been following yours for weeks. Your articles… they're a treasure. You've influenced people here more than many who have lived in this city their entire lives."
She lowered her gaze modestly.
— "I haven't done anything special. I've just told the truth."
— "Truth is rare," he said with a faint smile. "And you make it look beautiful."
Elira lifted her eyes.

For a moment, she felt a warmth in her chest—not emotion, but memory.
The memory of someone who had once looked at her the same way, with the sincere admiration of someone who truly valued her.

Arben.
His name came to her suddenly, without warning, like a wave crashing against the shores of her mind.
Why can't I forget him? she thought.
So much time had passed. So much had happened.
And yet every memory of him remained vivid—painfully clear, as if time had never moved forward.
His tired but gentle eyes appeared in her mind.
The last words he had spoken to her in the hospital room—softly, almost like a prayer.

He had become a dream that haunted her everywhere.
Even when she tried to focus on work, on fame, on the people who admired her, his name followed her like a shadow.
A painful reminder that even in the midst of success and public light, some wounds never truly close.
They simply learn how to exist.That was why the American journalist's compliment pleased her.
But only that much.
She stepped closer to the window and watched the fading light outside mixing with the shadows of evening.
She took a deep breath, as if searching for strength in the air.
Now she knew something with certainty:She could move forward.
She could build a new life.
She could speak loudly to the world.
But Arben would always remain a part of her—inseparable,

unforgettable.
A quiet fire that would burn forever in her memory.
The First Knot
As the crowd exited the hall, Michael followed Elira down the long corridor flooded with white light.
— "I'd like to talk longer," he said. "I want to write a full profile about you. Not just an interview… a story. People want to know who you are."
— "I'm not ready," she said quietly.
He stopped.
— "Anyone else in this country would be thrilled to have access to a journalist like me. You're the only person who hasn't said yes. That makes me even more curious."
She laughed softly, almost like a child.
— "I'm not anyone else."
— "I know."
He stepped a little closer.
— "And that's exactly why I want to know you."
At that moment, Samantha appeared around the corner of the corridor—like a silent storm of security. — "Time to go," she said in a professional tone, though her eyes were asking: Who is this man?
Michael raised his hands in a gesture of peace.
— "No problem. We'll talk."
He walked away slowly without turning his head.
Elira watched him as he left, but she didn't follow him with her eyes for long.
A broken dream weighed on her heart.A CONNECTION THAT DOESN'T BECOME LOVE

In the days that followed, Michael began sending her emails—never intrusive, always respectful.
"I'd like to understand your perspective on political transitions."
"What was your first month in the U.S. like?"
"Would you accept a professional coffee sometime?"
Elira replied briefly and politely, leaving no space for closeness.
For example:
— "Thank you, but I'm very busy."— "Maybe another day."
One evening Laura said to her:— "It seems like he's interested in you."Elira lowered her hands onto the keyboard.

— "He's a good journalist."— "I didn't ask about his work," Laura said, laughing with her eyes. "He likes you."
— "No. It's not like that."
Laura looked at her with sharp calmness.
— "Then someone else is in your heart."
Elira said nothing.She didn't want to.
But her eyes grew slightly misty—like the fog over the Potomac drifting across the old bridges of Georgetown.
THE HEART THAT DOESN'T HEAL
One cold autumn morning, while walking through Rock Creek Park, the soft wind from the forest brushed her face and she stopped.

Surrounded by green, with sunlight falling like golden

drops onto the ground, she thought:
No matter what I do, my heart has remained in Albania.
In a life that will never return.
She sat down on a wooden bench and closed her eyes
.A single tear slid down her cheek but never fell. It simply burned inside her heart—a sharp reminder that refused to fade.From a distance Michael approached, holding two cups of coffee.
The pale evening light cast shadows across his face.
— "I thought I might find you here. Hope you don't mind me bringing these," he said with a light smile.
Elira looked up.
She wasn't surprised. He was beginning to learn her rhythm—the way she experienced the world around her.

— "Thank you," she said, taking the coffee.
She didn't drink it. She simply held it in her hand, which trembled slightly.
Michael sat beside her, though not too close, respecting her space.
— "Why won't you let me get closer?" he asked.His voice was calm but filled with quiet tension. Direct. Straightforward—the way many Americans speak.
Elira lowered her head and looked at her folded hands.
— "Because I don't want to," she said softly.
— "Is there someone else?" he continued, studying every expression on her face.
She stayed silent.
For a long time.

Leaves rustled in the wind, like invisible hands pushing her to speak the truth she had kept hidden inside.
Finally, after a deep breath and a quiet pain, she said:
— "Yes."
Michael inhaled slowly, feeling the weight of the word.
— "And he is…?"
Elira glanced toward the wet path and fell silent again, knowing any answer would change everything between them.
— "It doesn't matter," she finally said, her voice trembling inside though steady on the surface.
— "He isn't here. He belongs to a life that will never return. But a heart doesn't change just because life does."
Michael lowered his eyes and forced a bitter smile.
— "Then I'm the wrong man… in the wrong place… at the wrong time."

— "No," Elira said quietly. "You're a good man. But I'm not free."
Michael stood up, finished his coffee in one long sip, and said:
— "Then I'll respect that. And I'll stay here… as a journalist. And as a friend."
He walked away slowly without looking back.
Days passed quickly.
Their friendship grew stronger.
But it remained only that—friendship.
Elira remained seated among the trees while the wind

brushed through her hair and Washington hummed around her like a vast, beautiful, lonely world.Evening settled softly over the city.

Washington had its own kind of light—a glow indebted to history but carrying the ambition of a modern metropolis. Near the Potomac River, the bridge lights shimmered on the water while the wind carried the scent of late autumn leaves.
They became friends.
Elira often walked beside Michael, her new colleague at CNN – Washington National News.
He was the kind of American journalist who seemed born with a microphone in his hand—serious, focused, and straightforward in conversation.
His calm professionalism helped Elira feel less exposed.
— "Elira, remember, this is just a routine public appearance," he told her with a relaxed smile.

— "I know," she replied. "But this city still feels enormous to me… as if it's watching me."Michael laughed lightly.

— "Washington is like our cameras. It always sees you—but it doesn't judge you."
The CNN studio was crowded.It would be the first time Elira appeared publicly as the author of an investigative segment about Albania—its violent transition and the dark year of 1997.
As the cameras were being prepared, Michael approached her holding a notebook.

— "So in the interview, I'll open the discussion and you'll explain the issues you published in Le Monde." — "Alright," she said, quietly swallowing her nervousness.
The main light fell on her face.
She had never forgotten the feeling of strong light.
In Albania, the only lights that had followed her were the headlights of cars trailing her through the night.

When the segment ended, Michael addressed her on camera.
— "It was a pleasure working with such a talented and courageous journalist," he said publicly.
That was enough.
The internet exploded.
Photos of them side by side—simply colleagues—went viral.
"Elira & Michael."
"The Dynamic Duo."
"A New Voice from the Balkans."
She wasn't used to this kind of American fame.
It frightened her.Not the fame itself—but the interpretations.
That evening, as she returned to her comfortable home in her neighborhood, the city streets were quiet, almost submerged in darkness.One by one the lights in the houses faded, leaving a gentle silence over the pavement.
Every sound of footsteps on the stones seemed to belong to a distant, fragile world.
Elira felt the familiar knife of memory—the painful, sweet sensation that appeared whenever she looked at the city

lights and realized that the beauty of Washington, its quiet happiness, its long streets and glowing houses, though real and reachable, were far away.
Very far from what she had left behind.
From those she had loved.
From the memories that never let her rest.
When she arrived home, she felt the weight of silence.
She opened her laptop.

The keyboard lights illuminated her face with a cold focus. Online newspapers were writing about her—about her success, about how she was changing perceptions of the Balkans.
The headlines weren't just names.
They were stamps of recognition.
"The New Voice of Testimony from the Balkans."
"The Woman Who Shook Europe."
"Elira: The Woman Who Showed the World the Shadows of Tirana."
She smiled for a moment—a thin, restrained smile.
But it faded quickly when she noticed one small word in her last email archive.
Arben.
His name glowed on the screen.

Alone.
He had sent no new message. No new email.
Nothing had changed.
They were all old messages—silent archives that still

eroded something inside her.Only his name remained unchanged in the computer's memory, and deeper still in the memories that never disappear, the ones you cannot delete with a single click.
Michael was a colleague—respected, steady, a professional figure offering stability and security.
But beside Michael, the thought of Arben was like a flame that refused to dieA burning memory—unstoppable and painful.
He had made her understand something that no success, distance, or public recognition could erase:
Some people, some bonds, never disappear. my homeland. I want it to be cleansed of evil.

The official paused for a moment, then smiled gently.
"That's exactly what makes you credible," she said. "And important."After the formal meeting, they left the conference room and walked down a corridor lined with large windows. From there, the obelisk of the Washington Monument rose above the city like a pillar of light.
Michael watched it for a moment.
"These places suit you, Elira. You look natural among them."
"Don't exaggerate," she laughed softly. "I come from a neighborhood in Tirana, Michael. It's that simple."
"But you have a story no one else has," he added. "And I know you didn't come here for fame. But fame is following you anyway."
She stopped by the window.

The afternoon sunlight fell across her face and glimmered in her moist eyes. She shook hands with the department chief and quietly left.

As they walked out of the building of the United States Department of State, she turned to her companion.

"Michael… sometimes I want to go back. To see my mother, my home, to walk the streets where I grew up. But… then I remember everything I went through. And I remember Arben."

Michael said nothing. He didn't need to.

"I don't have the strength to return yet," she continued. "I'm afraid that if I go back… everything I've built will collapse."

"Then wait," he said gently. "Wait until your heart tells you it's time. We are here. You're not alone here, Elira."

She looked at him for a long moment.

And she realized he spoke as a colleague, as a friend. Nothing more. And that realization calmed her.

Outside the building, the Washington wind blew her hair across her face. The security agent immediately stepped forward.

"The car is ready, Ms. Elira."

She turned once more and looked at the large, serious building of the United States Department of State.

Today a new chapter begins, she thought.

But my heart… still hasn't closed the old one.

And as the car slowly moved through the quiet streets of the capital, Elira closed her eyes, feeling the weight of two worlds:

The world of fame,
and the world of a wound that refused to heal.
The Autobiographical Book and Arben's Letter
The lights of Washington, DC fell softly across the large window of her study. Outside, the light January snow had begun to form a silvery-gray layer over the elegant rooftops of the Cleveland Park neighborhood.
Inside, on the white wooden desk, Elira's laptop illuminated the first page of a new document she had titled:
"Shadows of the Red Capital."
She read the title several times.
It wasn't simply a book.
It was her first return to the past—but now with a cold, almost clinical distance.Michael had been encouraging her for months to write it, while American publishers had sent her astonishing offers.

But she wasn't doing it for fame.
She was doing it to heal.
Elira closed her eyes for a moment and touched the keyboard.
The first word, then the second…
And the words began to flow, like a river breaking through ice.
"I have lived between two worlds:
an Albania that shattered me, and an America that sheltered me.
Yet neither of them healed me completely."
Her breathing faltered, as it always did whenever she

approached that dark chapter of her life.
Arben.
The only man she had ever loved.
The man who had lifted her to heaven and then dragged her to the edge of hell—not out of cruelty, but because of illness.
The man who had unintentionally become a danger to her life, even though he would never have wanted such a thing.
The man who had lost his reason while she had fled, leaving behind a piece of her heart lost somewhere in the darkness.
Elira wrote about him with a care that was almost painful.
As if every word were an attempt to save herself—just as much as it was an attempt to preserve his memory.

"Arben was the love of my life," she wrote.
"But love is sometimes not enough to save a soul that is drowning."
She felt every letter like a small fall of the heart.
Words flowed across the screen, and tears fell quietly onto the keyboard, some of them fading softly in the dim light of the room.
The silence of the room filled with an invisible weight of sorrow.
And she felt a deep emptiness inside herself, like an echo of memories that refused to let go.
At that moment—
Her phone made a sharp sound, suddenly pulling her out of her thoughts.
"You have a new email."

The words seemed almost to echo in the room, freezing her for a moment.Her heart beat irregularly, and she could not predict whether the message would bring comfort or new pain.
She shook her head slightly, wiped her tears with her right hand, and took a deep breath, trying to steady herself.
Among hundreds of emails, one caught her attention.

No subject.

Just a strange, unfamiliar address.
A strange feeling moved through her stomach—a mixture of sadness, curiosity, and fear.Her heart trembled.She clicked.
The message was short.
Very short.
Just one attachment:
"Letter.pdf."
She hesitated for a few seconds.
Every breath felt heavy, like waiting for something that might change everything.
Then she opened it.
On the screen appeared a handwritten letter.
A handwriting she recognized immediately—like the trace of his soul.
His letters had that familiar, unmistakable rhythm that made every word feel like an opening into his inner world.
And the first name she read was:
"My Elira."

She covered her mouth with her hand, almost crying out, but remained silent.Her whole body trembled—a mixture of joy and pain crashing together inside her heart.
The letter continued.

Elira…
A simple word, a beginning that carried the promise of the past—but also an invisible unease about what might follow.

A call that was not just a name, but a vision of memories, overwhelming emotions, and a new, unpredictable possibility.
I'm writing to you from the place where you left me—
and where I deserve to remain until I recover…
or perhaps forever.I don't know if I have the right to write to you.
I don't know if you will ever forgive me for what I did to both of us.
I only know one thing:
I am no longer the man I once was.
The doctors say I've made progress.
But progress does not bring you back.
I saw your name in the newspapers.
I watched your interview on NBC Nightly News. "I saw you smiling. It was a tired smile, Elira. My kind of smile.

I know I will never see you again.
I know I no longer deserve you.

I know your heart carries wounds that I caused.

But I want you to know one thing…

I am proud of you.

You carried the truth before the world—
the truth that I could not even defend for myself.

If this is the last message I ever send, I want you to know this:

I loved you.
I still love you.
And there isn't a single day that I don't miss you.

Arben."

Elira let the phone fall onto the table.
The sound of it striking the surface shattered the silence of the room.

Her head dropped into her hands, and for the first time she could no longer stop the tears. She felt every drop like a tremor breaking down the defenses she had built around herself.

"Oh, Arben…" she whispered.

Her voice faded into the warm hissing of the boiler and the soft hum of the heater working in the corner.

It was like reopening a wound that had barely been covered, but had never truly healed. The pain was both familiar and strange at the same time—a mixture of his absence and memories that refused to rest.

Her breathing became difficult, and every beat of her heart carried with it the memory of everything she had lost, but also everything she still wanted to keep alive.

She remained there, trapped in a heavy silence. The room around her felt abandoned.

Only the ticking of the clock and the faint hiss of the heating system filled the space, making every memory sharper and his absence deeper.

Then—

A soft knock sounded on the door.

Michael leaned his head inside.

"Elira… are you okay?"

She quickly wiped her face.

"Yes… I'm just writing."

He looked at her for a long second before speaking.

"We're going to Capitol Hill tomorrow. You'll be speaking before the security committee. The world is listening to you, Elira."

She lowered her gaze.

"Yes… the world is listening to me."

"But who are you listening to?" he asked gently.

She slowly turned toward the computer screen, where Arben's letter was still glowing.

A pale light that seemed unwilling to fade.

It was as if every letter he had written was still alive, gripping her heart and bringing back memories that refused to let her rest.

"Some voices can't be silenced… not even by America, Michael," she said softly.

Her words dissolved into the quiet space of the room. It was both a plea for understanding and a painful confession that had nowhere else to go.

Michael stood still for a moment, watching her in silence.

Then he quietly stepped out, without protest, without argument—like a calm figure standing in the middle of a storm that only she could feel.

The room fell silent again.

But the air felt heavy, filled with absence and memories that refused to fade.

She remained there, trying to process every word, every lingering trace of Arben, realizing that some wounds never heal—no matter the distance or the silence.

Elira slowly closed her laptop, as if closing a chapter she never truly wanted to open, yet could never completely close.

The letter remained there in her mind like a small flame that would never go out.

And she knew something with certainty:

Great loves never die.
They simply remain frozen—waiting… for one day.

The Albanian Diplomat

Evening had fallen over Washington, DC, and the streets around Massachusetts Avenue had turned into quiet paths where only the embassy lights shone like small diplomatic islands.

Elira walked slowly, accompanied by two American security agents, her heart beating uneasily.

That morning Michael had told her:

"The Albanian embassy has requested to meet with you. They've sent a senior diplomat from Tirana specifically for you."

The news had sent a sharp stab of fear through her stomach.

Albania…

It called to her, yet it also frightened her.

Inside the lobby of the embassy building, the smell of coffee and new carpet greeted them in the strangest way possible—like a mixture of home and anxiety.

Because it reminded her of Tirana… and of everything she had endured there.

At the end of the corridor, a man of medium height, around

fifty years old, with graying hair and tired eyes, was waiting.

"Ms. Elira," he said, bowing slightly. "I am Ambassador Mentor Kodra, sent from Tirana regarding your case."

He extended his hand with the reserved courtesy of a diplomat.

Elira stepped forward.

"Thank you for coming. I didn't expect Albania… to ask for me."

"Albania is divided, Ms. Elira," he replied calmly. "Some consider you a traitor. Others consider you a savior. In either case… you cannot be ignored."
He invited her to sit in a small, warm lounge with heavy red curtains and a low wooden table between them. The American agents remained by the door.
The ambassador wasted no time.
"In Tirana, after your interview on NBC Nightly News and your article in Le Monde, a political storm has begun. Some demand deep reforms, others want the matter closed. But the government fears you will continue publishing. That's why I'm here."
Elira raised an eyebrow, her clear gaze challenging the silence that followed.
"But I'm not here for politics."
He looked straight at her, as if trying to see beyond her shield.

"Then what do you want?"
The question she had held inside for months finally burst out.
"I want… I want Dr. Arben to be rehabilitated. I want the Albanian state to take care of him. I want the best doctors involved. I want his name not to be dishonored.
He is not a criminal.
He is sick."
The ambassador paused.
He closed his eyes for a moment, as if preparing the difficult words he had to say.
Silence stretched between them.
"Dr. Arben is a complicated case," he said finally. "His file is extensive. There are many factors… many influences… many eyes watching."
"He is a human being," Elira replied, her voice low but firm, each word landing like a stone on the table.
"He was ill. Whether you like it or not, he is also a victim of an Albanian society that still does not treat mental health properly.
And I am alive because of him.
He protected me… before he lost his mind."
The ambassador remained silent for a long time, weighing his thoughts carefully.
"Ms. Elira," he said at last, "your request is not simple. His rehabilitation requires a political decision. And in Albania… every decision is a battle."
Elira felt the weight of the words but did not retreat.
Her heart beat hard—not with fear, but with determination.

She knew this was not just a battle for one man.
It was a battle for justice, for dignity, and to show that people who become ill should not be forgotten… and should not be dishonored.
"If you do not dare to fight for him…" she said, and the silence that followed was stronger than any threat.
"Then who will?"
"Then fight," she added softly, with a determination that seemed to shake the air itself.
He watched her for a long moment before adjusting his tone.
"There is something you should know.
Dr. Arben has begun to stabilize. The doctors in Tirana report small but steady improvements.
And… he asked for you."
Elira's heart seemed to stop.
"He… asked for me?"
"Yes. And the letter you received…" the ambassador lowered his voice. "It passed through several hands before reaching you. He didn't send it alone. Someone on the staff allowed it to leave the system."
Elira lifted her head.
"Why?"
Instead of answering directly, the ambassador said:
"Because there are people in Albania who want justice. Even when politics ties their hands."
Then he leaned forward, his expression serious.
"Elira… if you publicly request his rehabilitation, it will have great impact. No one will be able to oppose you. You

are the international face of this case. Your voice carries weight."
She looked at him—worried, wounded, but certain.
"Then I will do it."
"Are you sure?"
"Yes. I owe him that," she said quietly but firmly. "To anyone I have ever loved, I owe the truth."
Her words fell into silence, but they filled the room with an invisible gravity.
It was not simply a promise.
It was an inner oath—a responsibility she could no longer avoid, even though she knew the road ahead would not be easy.
The ambassador slowly stood, tall and composed like an untouchable figure, his eyes fixed on her…It seemed as if his eyes were digging into every hidden thought behind her words. A heavy silence filled the room, and each passing second seemed to accelerate, their heartbeats echoing like an invisible alarm.
"Then prepare yourselves," he said, his strong voice moving through the room like a cold wave.
"Albania will be shaken again."
She understood immediately that this was not merely a political warning, but a prelude to her own fate—and to the fate of those she loved. A duty rested on her shoulders, a storm was approaching, and a truth could no longer be postponed.
For a moment, the room felt narrow, almost too small for the tension filling the air—a tension born from every breath

she took and every carefully chosen word spoken by the ambassador. Each silence that followed carried an invisible weight that seemed to press down on the shoulders of everyone present.

Outside, Michael was waiting for her, his eyes trying to read every hidden emotion on her face.
"How did it go?"
Elira looked up at the night sky, where the moon hung lazily above the domes of the embassies.
"Now the real storm begins," she said.
"And you? Are you ready?"
She closed her eyes and remembered Arben's face during the beautiful years—the purity of his smile, the promise he had once made to her:
"I will love you until the end."
"I'm ready for him," she said quietly.
And the cold, vast city of Washington, DC seemed almost to recognize her words, as if silently accepting the help she was trying to give the doctor.
Albania Reacts
When the news spread globally—
"Albanian journalist Elira publicly calls for the rehabilitation of Dr. Arben, the once-renowned physician who suffered severe mental health problems after the tragedy of 1997."
—a wave of shock swept across Albania.
Tirana, the city Elira had left behind, suddenly felt different to everyone. Government buildings, illuminated by the pale January sun, seemed heavier and older, as if burdened

by the weight of collective memory.
In the press hall, journalists and cameramen gathered with microphones and cameras, placing the first wave of pressure on the government.
Inside the Prime Minister's office, tension filled the room.
A political adviser tried to calm his colleagues.
"Have you seen the news? Elira—from Washington—is demanding Arben's rehabilitation!"
"Yes," the prime minister replied with a grim expression. "That case has been sensitive for years. Now it's becoming international."
"This will put enormous pressure on our institutions," another adviser added. "Not only public opinion, but the European Commission and the U.S. State Department are paying attention."
The prime minister slowly slid his hand across the table.
"We must act carefully. We cannot ignore this. But we cannot allow it to appear as a sign of weakness either."
The reaction of Albanian media was immediately divided.
In a television studio of Radio Televizioni Shqiptar (RTSH), a well-known journalist discussed the issue:
"This may become a defining case in the history of Albanian media. Elira is asking for the rehabilitation of Dr. Arben, a highly controversial figure. Should the state take this step?"

A mental-health expert responded:
"This is not only a political issue. It is a humanitarian one. He was a victim of the circumstances and the chaos of 1997."

While some politicians described her request as provocative, a large part of the public began writing on social media:
"Elira is right!"
"Dr. Arben deserves healing and dignity."
"It's time for humane justice, not political justice."
A wave of support began forming online, placing increasing pressure on the Albanian government and its institutions.
As the news spread, Elira remained in her home in Washington, DC. The city lights illuminated her tired but beautiful face, marked by tension.
She held her laptop and read the pages of Albanian news websites. The comments were numerous and varied, but she read them all.
Her heart beat rapidly—not because of fame, but because of hope that Arben might still be saved.

"Michael…" she said, turning slowly toward him, her breath trembling in her chest.
"Albania has reacted. Voices are rising. Institutions are moving. It won't be easy… not for you, and not for me."
For a moment, silence stretched between them like an invisible wall.
Michael looked at her calmly, with the kind of calm that comes not from the absence of fear but from accepting it. His eyes remained steady, as if he had already made peace with the consequences.
"But it's the right thing," he finally said, his voice quiet but firm.
"You're doing what no one else dared to do. And sometimes

the truth demands more than courage… it demands sacrifice."

He stepped closer—not to persuade her, but to support her. "History isn't changed by those who stay silent," he added. "It is written by those who are willing to pay the price."

Elira closed her eyes, and a thought burst through her mind:

If this doesn't save him, nothing will save my heart.

In this way, public and international pressure began to influence the Albanian government. After several days, the Ministry of Health announced the formation of a commission to review the rehabilitation of Dr. Arben, opening the path toward a decision that might save a life and finally close a wound from the past.

Life in Washington, but Her Heart with Arben

Washington had become her new home.

The wide streets lined with snow-covered trees, the lights of the monuments shining at night—this was the place where Elira walked every morning on her way to work at the television network CNN.

She was now part of the main team, a recognized and respected figure frequently asked to provide analysis about the Balkans.

Yet despite fame and success, her heart always beat somewhere else.

With Dr. Arben.

In the studio she spoke calmly and confidently before the cameras. The American audience admired her.

She was the beautiful speaker from Albania who told stories

about democracy, transition, criminal gangs, and the dark shadows of 1997.
Every sentence she spoke was measured, strong, and persuasive.
"You're well known now," Michael told her one day at work.
"Many Americans follow you."
"Yes," she replied with a faint smile.
"But they don't follow my real story."
"And what is that?" he asked curiously.
Elira fell silent.
Her eyes drifted toward the window where the Potomac River shimmered like silver in the distance.
"My heart is far away," she said softly.
"Somewhere in Albania."
Michael understood immediately. He asked nothing more.

Life in her home seemed calm and modern. The neighborhood was safe, filled with small cafés and bookstores.
But every night, when the city lights dimmed and Washington grew quiet, Elira closed herself inside her room, opened her laptop, and felt Arben's absence.
Memories of him—his smile, his warm voice—flowed through her like an unstoppable river.
She wrote new pages for her autobiographical book about every painful event and every day she had spent far from him.
But Arben's last letter, kept in a small box on her desk, was

always there.
A memory both painful and sweet.
Many American colleagues visited her for coffee or lunch.
They saw Elira as a symbol of courage.
But no one could replace the place Arben held in her heart.
There was no new romance.
No flirtation.
Only the memory of him—and the fragile hope that one day he might recover from the darkness of his illness and perhaps, someday, their paths might cross again.
"Sometimes I think I will never be completely happy," she said one morning in the office while looking out the window.
"Why?" Michael asked.
"Because my heart hasn't moved," she replied quietly.
"I can't find peace here… when he still doesn't have it."
Michael said nothing.
There was nothing left to say.
Only the majestic silence of Washington, the quiet movement of the river, and the lights shining above the monuments—
and Elira's heart, still tied to a memory she could never forget. Her modern and comfortable home seemed peaceful.
Her neighborhood was a safe little world filled with cafés and small bookstores, clean air, and long quiet walks.
But every night, after the lights dimmed and the city fell silent, Elira would close herself in her room, open her laptop, and feel Arben's absence.
Memories of him—his smiles, his warm voice—flowed

through her like an irreversible river.
She wrote new lines for her autobiographical book, about every painful event and every day she had spent far from him. But Arben's last letter, kept in a small box on her desk, was always there.
A memory that was both painful and sweet.
Many American colleagues came by for coffee or lunch. They saw Elira as a role model. But no one could replace the space Arben had left in her heart.There was no new romance.
No flirtation.
Only the memory of him—and the thought that perhaps one day he might become stable and free, released from the terror of his mental illness.And perhaps, one day, they might meet again.
"Sometimes I think I will never be completely happy," she said one morning in the office with Michael as she looked down at the city streets from the window.
"Why?" he asked.
"Because my heart hasn't moved," she replied quietly. "I cannot find peace here… while he still hasn't found it."
Michael fell silent, understanding. There was nothing he could say.
Only the majestic silence of Washington, DC, the calm river flowing in the distance, and the lights shining over the monuments.
And Elira's heart, still tied to a memory—to a love she could never forget.
Life went on. She conducted interviews, published articles,

and worked on her television segments. Washington was welcoming and vast.

But at every moment Arben's face returned to her mind—his laughter, his gaze, the breath they had shared during the most difficult days.

"One day the time will come…" she whispered one night, looking at the moon above the quiet streets.

"And then I will find true peace."

Until then, fame, success, and the lights of Washington were only distant shadows of a life she still did not fully feel was her own.

Her heart belonged only to Arben.

And nothing could change that.

News from Albania

The afternoon in Washington, DC had settled quietly over the city streets. The lights of the famous monuments glowed like strange stars across the gray evening.

Elira sat by the large window of her apartment with a warm cup of tea in her hands, feeling a fragile calm mixed with anticipation and anxiety.

Suddenly her phone made a familiar sound.

An email had arrived from the Embassy of Albania in Washington.

Her heart began to beat faster.

She opened it immediately.

Subject: Update on Dr. Arben

Sender: Embassy of Albania

She began to read.

Ms. Elira,

The commission for the rehabilitation of Dr. Arben reports steady progress. He remains under specialized medical supervision and has begun to show signs of stabilization.
Doctors confirm that he may begin a gradual return to public life and could participate in consultations for patients facing similar conditions.
Whenever you are ready, a secure visit can be arranged for you to meet him.
Respectfully,
Embassy of Albania
Elira slowly stood up, her body trembling. Tears fell naturally down her cheeks.
It was the news she had waited months to hear.
He was alive.
And he had begun to heal.
Every breath he took—even if still fragile—was proof that the danger had begun to retreat.
"Michael…" she called softly, taking a step toward him.
Her voice trembled, filled with both lingering fear and the relief of that rare moment when hope was no longer just a wish.
He turned immediately, concerned, as if he had felt her trembling even before hearing her voice. His eyes fixed on her, attentive and searching.
"What happened?" he asked, trying to sound calm but unable to hide the anxiety in his tone.
"He… he's improving," she said, tears filling her eyes.
"He may be able to meet again. Michael… I can go see him."

Michael remained silent for a few seconds, weighing his words carefully.
"It's risky," he finally said. "But it's also the right thing. If you believe you must go, I will help you organize everything."
Elira took a deep breath. All the fear, the painful memories, and her deep love for Arben erupted inside her like a silent storm.
"I can't stay here any longer knowing that he's fighting alone," she said firmly.
"He needs to see that I haven't forgotten him. I cannot let all these months pass without him seeing my face again."

A plan began to form in her mind.

She would travel quietly, avoiding media attention and the unpredictable pressure of politics. Michael would help with security and coordination.
She didn't want headlines.
Only a private meeting.
A moment where their hearts could face each other without barriers.
"I will go," she repeated, holding the laptop tightly against her chest.
"I cannot wait any longer."
Michael looked at her for a long moment.
He didn't need to say anything.
He understood everything.
Life in Washington would continue—her work, the interviews, the book she was writing, the fame that followed

her everywhere.
But now a more important mission called her.
To be near him.
And as the city lights illuminated the silent streets, Elira felt a mixture of emotions: fear, hope, love, and determination. Her heart had only one destination.

Albania.

And Dr. Arben.
Reflection
Lost love never truly disappears.
It simply moves somewhere inside us, like a closed room where the memory of someone who is no longer beside us continues to breathe.
People say time heals.
But time heals nothing.
It only teaches us how to carry pain without collapsing beneath it.
True love never dies.
It remains suspended above us like a cloud that never rains but never disappears.
We continue living, laughing, working.
Yet deep inside we carry a light that belongs to someone else—a light that never goes out even when the soul grows tired.
Elira's love for Arben was exactly that light.
A quiet fire that never asked for reward.
Lost in this world, yet alive inside her.

Perhaps that is the destiny of all great loves.
They never truly end.
They simply continue to exist in a place where they cannot be touched—but can always be felt.
Lost love is proof that our hearts once knew how to love with their full strength, even when life forces us to walk alone.
The Fall of the Red Capital (next chapter title) For weeks, the police had been receiving complaints from various neighborhoods: masked figures, shadows appearing at night, cars without license plates, silhouettes hiding in apartment entrances. At first, no one took them seriously—Albania had seen many strange things. But the complaints became so numerous that intervention by an experienced officer was required.
Captain Ardit Hoxha, a calm and decisive man, took the file in hand. He looked up from the night shift reports and said:
— There's more here than simple vandalism. Bring me the list of surveillance cameras in the area and cross-check every late-night report.
By the next morning, he already had a clear pattern: all incidents occurred near places Elira frequented—her route to work, the café where she had her morning coffee, the shops where she bought groceries, the media centers where she met colleagues.

— This isn't a coincidence, — Ardit whispered, studying the map closely.

The notes pointed to a name he hadn't expected: Dr. Arben.

Arben's house was silent and dark, as if no one had lived there for years. The police entered using standard procedure. Ardit opened the windows, and a heavy, stale odor filled the room.
— Captain… — a police officer called from the back room.
— You need to see this.
On the wall was a large panel completely covered with photographs of Elira. Some were taken from a distance, some very close, some annotated in red ink.Another officer brought a large cardboard box.
— A complete file, Captain. Dates, times, locations… He tracked her every step.
Ardit picked up one sheet. It was a map of Tirana, with streets marked in red pencil, areas circled, black dots showing the cafés and locations where Elira had been.

He lowered his head slowly, as if a weight pressed against his chest.
— This man… — he said in a low voice.
— Yes, Captain… — the officer replied. — He was obsessed.
Then they found something else.
A security guard from the psychiatric hospital stepped forward in the dark hallway of the house.
— Captain… Arben lived for months in the isolation ward. He cried day and night. He talked to himself… he spoke of Elira. He held her photograph even while taking his medication. He never removed it from his heart, even when

he was lucid.Ardit took a deep breath.
— So, he truly loved her… but he was seriously ill.
The guard nodded.
— An unhinged love, Captain. He couldn't control it.

Ardit moved slowly among the evidence, deep in thought: Was he a criminal or a victim?
All the evidence accused him… yet everything in that house showed he wasn't fully aware of his actions.
The Trails of the "Red Shadows"
Morning air brushed lightly against the curtains of Captain Ardit Hoxha's office. He stood in front of a desk piled with files, winter's pale light falling across the city map. The red circles, drawn by Arben on that wall of madness, now seemed even more alarming: they matched real incidents.
— Captain, — a young officer said, holding a tablet. — We've analyzed cameras near the "Ali Demi" neighborhood. The same silhouette has been seen several times. We're comparing it with last night's footage from "Bllok."
— Do they match? — Ardit asked without looking up.
— Yes, Captain. Same walk, same movement patterns.
Ardit cut him off sharply:
— They're Bac Dhelpra's people, — he said in a low but firm voice, as if each word were weighed carefully. — Arben didn't act alone. He was just a tool, a small link in a much longer chain.
A heavy silence fell in the office. The air thickened, as if the walls themselves were listening. Officers exchanged quick, tense glances. No one spoke for several seconds,

yet everyone understood what the name meant.— Any updates on him? — Ardit broke the silence, leaning slightly on the desk. — About Bac.One of the intelligence chiefs leaned forward, slowly opening a plastic file. The rustle of papers echoed through the quiet room. Inside were reports, photographs, and quick notes collected over months.

— We have movement, — he finally said, looking up from the file. — Not very visible, but enough to know Bac Dhelpra hasn't disappeared. On the contrary… he's preparing to leave, probably seeking asylum… somewhere.

— He left Albania illegally. With false documents. Entered Turkey and applied for political asylum. Turkish authorities are reviewing the request.

Ardit rubbed his beard.

— Naturally. Criminals turn into angels once they cross the border.

Later that day, Ardit returned to Arben's house. The door was still open, just as the experts had left it. An eerie quiet filled the space. The smell of dampness and hospital medicine seemed embedded in the air.

On the kitchen table, he found a notebook torn in half. It contained fragmented sentences, written in a shaky hand:

"Elira mustn't be afraid…"

"Elira is beautiful… pure… Don't forget me… I love her…"

"Don't touch… don't harm…"

Arben's mind had trembled. But so had his heart.

Ardit closed the notebook carefully. He could not deny it: Arben had been sick, lonely, abandoned by the world, drowned in a love that defied logic.

At the psychiatric hospital, an elderly nurse met him in the corridor.

— The doctor was a good man, Captain, — he said quietly. — He often cried. Spoke to Elira as if she were there beside him. Begged her to come back. Called her name in his sleep. He was completely lost.
— Did he ever mention the "shadows"? — Ardit asked.
— Yes, many times. He said: "I'm not alone… there are others… They will hurt… They will get close to Elira…" But no one took him seriously. He was in a critical state.
Ardit lowered his head. Now he understood: Arben had warned them, but no one had listened.
That evening, Ardit returned to the station. The offices were still crowded; officers moved with documents in hand. He called an urgent meeting.
— Ladies and gentlemen, — he began, — this is no longer just the madness of a lovesick man. We have a network. A real organization. Arben was only the tip of the iceberg. Others are active and dangerous. Known as the "Red Shadows."
An officer raised his hand hesitantly:
— Captain, what exactly are the "Red Shadows"?

Ardit activated the projector. A faded photo of Bac Dhelpra appeared on the screen, taken from old operational archives.

— This man, — he said firmly, — was the brain behind many covert operations that have struck Albania in recent years.

He operated behind the scenes, linked to a dark network controlling information, manipulating individuals, and fomenting political chaos.
He paused, weighing his words.
— Arben was part of this program… not willingly. Unaware, manipulated, sick. He was a tool, not the author.
Total silence.
Then Ardit added:
— We do not punish a madman. But we will catch those who drove him to madness.
This was only the beginning.
The News That Shook Two Cities
The decision to launch a broad investigation into the "Red Shadows" spread quickly through the security structures.

But beyond the dark offices and secret files, something else was happening in parallel.
Far away, in another city, a woman named Elira began to receive the first pieces of information.
In her Washington residence, she was preparing her next broadcast for American television. She had learned to speak clearly, precisely, with a poise she had never lost, even after life had turned everything upside down.
The door knocked lightly.
— Miss Elira? — a soft voice said. It was one of the American security officers, sent by the State Department.
— Yes, come in, — she said, lowering her pen.
The officer handed her an envelope.
— We received a communication from Tirana. Your

personal security investigations have been reopened. The Albanian authorities are cooperating with us. It seems the case wasn't as simple as initially thought.
Elira felt her face pale.
— It's… about Arben? — she asked, her voice trembling.
The officer did not speak immediately.
— We want you to be officially informed. You are safe here, but you must remain vigilant.
She sat slowly in the armchair by the window. Outside, the Washington sky was churning, turning a heavy gray. She looked on, heart pounding… She felt lost, as if searching for the sun above the clouds of Tirana.

— Why is this investigation opening now? — she asked.

— Because someone in Albania discovered something very big, — the officer replied. — Captain Ardit Hoxha uncovered evidence of an entire network of people who have been surveilling you… and one of them was Arben.
She lowered her head, her voice barely a whisper:
— He didn't do anything to hurt me… He was… lost. Completely insane.
The officer looked at her with compassion.
— We know, ma'am. The department has received the reports. Arben was manipulated, sick, a man who couldn't control himself. Don't worry, ma'am. The investigation continues…
Meanwhile, in Tirana, Captain Ardit Hoxha called his team into the operations room.
In the center of the table sat a projector, displaying new

images of suspects. Shadows moving at night. Hooded men. A black car without plates, spotted in different neighborhoods.
— Today we begin Operation "Red Foot," — he said. — Objective: identify every person who has been in contact with the "Bac Dhelpra" network. We will track communications, movements, and suspicious finances. This is not a game. We're facing a structure that has operated in the shadows of the state for years.

One of the detectives, a woman with long experience in investigations, said:
— I've seen Arben's file. He wasn't the organizer. He was used. Sick. Madly in love. These people exploited him. We have evidence he was psychologically manipulated, placed into schemes he couldn't even understand.
Ardit nodded.
— That's exactly why we won't pursue him legally. Arben is a victim. He carries Elira in his soul… and he lived under the dictates of people far darker than he.
A young officer asked:
— And Bac Dhelpra?
Ardit looked at him sharply, his calm tone cold but firm.
— He is the head of all this. He burned Albania, destroyed lives, created chaos. Now he hides in Turkey. But we will track his every step.
A heavy silence fell over the room. Everyone understood: they were entering a secret war, against something that lived in the shadows.

At the end of the day, Ardit left the office. The Tirana sky had turned violet behind the hills. He lit a cigarette and thought:

— Elira… justice will be done. We will prove it. And Arben will be cleared. This story must end once and for all.

The wind blew softly, like the prelude to an approaching storm. The Red Shadow, like all evils lurking in darkness, was beginning to feel threatened. Red shadows over the soul of an innocent man.

The police only began investigating after citizens complained of masked figures moving silently at night through neighborhoods, leaving no trace. People said they felt followed, watched by unseen eyes. But no one realized that every movement, every shadow, had been orchestrated by a dark network using Arben—a man who only wanted Elira.Captain Ardit Hoxha, a quiet officer with long experience in organized crime and a personal hatred for secret networks that destroy lives, took the case. He was the first to see the pattern: behind every complaint, every report, there was a scheme—a logic only the sick minds of old intelligence services could have created.

When they entered Arben's house again, silence hung thick like a funeral veil. The captain and his two officers paused, holding their breath. The room looked like an altar of pain, a place where a human soul had been slowly torn apart.

On the walls they found files, photographs of Elira, maps of her movements, dates, times, itineraries implanted in someone's mind. One entire wall was covered in red notes—not the notes of a madman, but of a man directed

by someone else. By a foreign hand. With fear lodged deep in his soul.

In a corner of the room, they found his unwashed clothes tossed aside, and a photograph of Elira tucked in his pocket. As if it were a second heart. As if it were the last breath of his life.

Arben, now in the psychiatric hospital, cried every day and spoke to Elira. He called her, begged for her, sought her like a child searching for a mother. He could not understand why his life had been destroyed. He didn't realize he had been used. Bac Dhelpra, the former intelligence officer who had burned Albania with his intrigues, had fled to Turkey seeking political asylum, leaving behind a shadow network tracking every move of an innocent girl.

Arben was neither guilty nor criminal. He was a victim. A pawn thrown into a game he could not understand. His sincere love had been turned into a tool of coercion.

The files found in the house were heavy. There were falsified reports, forged documents, fake analyses. Evidence incriminating Arben—but paradoxically, also evidence clearing him.

Ardit Hoxha understood immediately:

This man was not the author of the crime; he was prey to a dark machine.

— "He was used. Destroyed. Sickened by what was done to him," — the captain said in a low voice, never taking his eyes off the photograph of Elira Arben carried whenever he slept.

In the hospital, Arben spoke in a whisper, as if Elira sat by the foot of his bed:

— "Elira… don't leave me… I have nothing… only you are left… I'm exhausted… they're killing me slowly…"
The nurses said that at night he tried to get up, as if he wanted to run to Tirana, to her, to a dream that no longer remained.
Meanwhile, Captain Ardit Hoxha continued tracking the "Red Shadows." Every lead pointed to one name: Bac Dhelpra. The man who had blown up institutions, people, lives; who had used Arben as a shield and then vanished.
Although the police found countless photos of Elira in Arben's house, numerous notes, and suspicious materials, they realized he could not face justice. Not because he was guilty, but because he was broken. He had been destroyed. He had become a shadow of himself. He lived only with pain and his boundless love for Elira. And that love had kept him alive—but also driven him toward the abyss.

The Dark Room of the Psychiatric Hospital

Arben sat curled up near the small barred window. Morning light sliced through like a thin line across his face. He had weakened. His eyes had lost their former shine, while his hands trembled relentlessly. His notebooks were scattered on the floor, all filled with a single name that burned in his soul: Elira.
Dr. Ana Marku, the ward doctor, entered quietly.
— Arben… did you take your medication today? — she asked softly. He looked like a lost child.
— Doctor… has she come? She said she would… Elira can't leave me. I know she can't…

His voice trembled. For days he had been repeating the same sentence, but today it seemed heavier, like a weight pressing down on him.
Dr. Ana sat beside him.
— Arben, Elira isn't here… But the world outside is moving. Many things are being investigated. Everything will come to light. You've been a victim… not a criminal.
Arben lifted his head. For a brief moment, a spark of clear, raw pain lit his eyes.
— I know… he forced me. Bac Dhelpra… he told me Elira was in danger. I only wanted to protect her…
— I know, — the doctor said softly. — And the police understand that too.

The Discovery That Shook Captain Ardit Hoxha
In his office at the Tirana Police Directorate, Captain Ardit Hoxha had stacked a mountain of files across his desk. He had worked three sleepless nights. Numbers, names, photographs—they all danced before his eyes like shadows.
A young officer knocked.
— Sir, Captain… we're ready with the analysis of Arben's computer.— Come in! — the captain barked. He opened the door. The young officer approached slowly, placing a USB on the desk.
— We found very clear evidence that some files were not created by him. They were inserted externally. Likely… by an intelligence service. The trail leads to an operational center in Izmir, Turkey. Where Bac Dhelpra is suspected to have fled.

Ardit rose immediately.
— So someone blamed him for the entire surveillance network? And he was just a doctor broken by love?
— Yes, Captain. Everything points to Arben being used.

Ardit closed his eyes. A heavy sigh escaped him.
— Our Albania… fractured and defiled by people like this. Wow… friends, he said. How many scoundrels have we produced as a nation? We will never stop their dark game. An innocent man was destroyed just for loving wrongly… This is the pain, not just mine, but everyone's.
Arben's House – The Room of Secrets
We remember: when the police entered Arben's house, they were stunned. The walls were covered with photos of Elira. Not like a maniac—but like someone searching for hope. Every image had notes: "Her smile saves me," "The path to life," "My light."
Then, in a corner of the room, they found a large black folder bearing the emblem of an agency that didn't exist in any official registry. Inside were forged documents, surveillance orders, movement maps—all signed with a pseudonym: BDH. Bac Dhelpra.
Ardit slammed his fist on the desk.
— He exploited him. Pushed him toward madness. This man is not guilty… he is a victim.
His veteran officer, Iliri, spoke in a trembling voice:
— Reminds me of some old state security cases, sir. Tools may have changed, but the methods remain the same. Hunting fragile people… it's always the same.

Ardit lowered his head.
— This world… never changes.
Arben's Dark Nights in the Hospital
The doctors said Arben slept little. Every night, he would rise, holding Elira's photo to his chest and whispering:
— Forgive me… please, forgive me… I only wanted to protect you… They told me… They lied to me… Elira…
Several times, doctors found him crying silently, face buried in his hands. His pain was not that of a madman.
It was the pain of a man who had loved deeply and been broken.
— Come… come and tell me I'm not alone… — he whispered.
Then he would calm, as if Elira were there, brushing his shoulder.

"Impossible love," a nurse wrote in her report. "He's not afraid of us. He's afraid of the emptiness that remains inside him."

The Pursuit of the Shadow – Bac Dhelpra's Escape

Interpol reports arrived swiftly: Bac Dhelpra had crossed the border into Turkey three days before his network was uncovered. He applied for political asylum, claiming Albania persecuted him unfairly. Turkish media presented him as a "dissident." The reality was otherwise.
In his office, Ardit spoke sharply:
— This case is an attack on our state. But above all… this man destroyed the life of a doctor and now seeks to escape

unpunished, acting like an opposition hero.
Iliri asked:
— What do we do about Arben?
Ardit lowered his eyes.
— We free him. Rehabilitate him. This man has suffered more than all of us together. It is a sin. A person like him should never be crushed by a criminal.
His Exoneration

The final police report was clear:
"Arben Kodra has committed no criminal offense. He was used by an external agency while in a severe psychological state at the time of involvement. He is outside any legal responsibility."
Ardit read it with a trembling voice.
— We owe this man his life… — he said.
Alone, with Elira's Photograph
The bitter scent of medicine filled Room 27 of the psychiatric hospital. Arben sat by the iron bed, his back slightly hunched—like a tree that had weathered countless storms. Every detail bore the mark of exhaustion: long hair, dark circles under his eyes, trembling hands.
Yet, amid this inner wasteland, he held Elira's photograph. He looked at it as if she were a piece of the sky he had carried with him. He smiled slowly.
— Elira… — he whispered. — You are the only light in this place. I feel you near… so near… Even though I lost you… Even though they took everything from me…

He placed the photo over his heart, holding it there as if drawing life from it.— They told me you were in danger. They lied. They used me. They drove me mad. But my heart… it was not sold. It was not broken. It remained yours.

He closed his eyes. In the darkness, he saw Elira again: laughing, speaking, calling his name. His love was not a sick fantasy. It was a real wound.

Bac Dhelpra – Escape, Hell, and Fear

In a dingy hotel on the outskirts of Izmir, Bac Dhelpra paced nervously between window and door. His face had grown thin, eyes scanning every shadow outside. His phone had been thrown aside…He had started sending so many coded messages that even he had begun to forget who he was sending them to.

— They betrayed me… all of them… — he whispered.

— Arben should have disappeared. Not come out innocent…

He wiped his forehead with cold hands. He knew: Albania wouldn't let him rest. Neither would America.

And what scared him most… Dr. Arben knew everything.

— They're following me… — he said, pacing back and forth. — But I… I'm a fox. I'm used to the hunt. I'm used to smoke and blood.

He grabbed a black folder—the copy of what he had left with Arben. He opened it. Photographs of Elira. His notes.

The plan to use Arben as a shield. And there it was: a photo of Arben crying, holding Elira's photo to his chest.

Bac Dhelpra laughed coldly.
— Poor doctor… — he said. — Does love not kill you enough? If I don't finish the job, how will the world? If I don't do it, how will the fools do it…?

He laughed… but then the laughter caught in his throat.

On the screen of the old TV, news appeared:

"Albanian police declare Dr. Arben Kodra innocent. The charges were manipulated. Foreign intelligence infiltration suspected."

Bac turned up the volume.

The anchor continued:

"Captain Ardit Hoxha states that extradition will be sought for the person known as 'Bac Dhelpra.'"

His face went pale.
— No… no… — he muttered. — It can't be over this fast…

He slammed the folder shut and sat on the floor. For the first time, it seemed he felt real fear.

Arben – A Heart That Doesn't Give Up

Late at night in the hospital, Arben awoke from a dream of a familiar voice. Elira. It seemed as though she was speaking from the window, sitting on the bench outside. Her voice was gentle, like a scent drifting in from the sea:
— Don't be afraid, Arben. I haven't forgotten you.

He rose, shaken.
— Are… you here? Elira… don't leave me. I never wanted to lose you. Not you. Not my light.

The doctors heard him speaking in quiet tones, no madness, no shouting. Only pure love, mixed with the pain of a man who could never find his way to the one he wanted.

Nurse Mirela watched from the doorway and whispered:
— This man isn't sick. This man… is wounded by life.

Meanwhile, Arben kissed Elira's photo, holding it in his hands like a treasured jewel.
— Elira… — his voice low, tired, but filled with new clarity.
— My love never left me. It kept me alive, even when everything else was falling apart.

He took a deep breath, as if gathering strength to release the words trapped in his soul.
— And that horror… That man… Dhelpra — his voice wavered for a moment. — He who pushed me down the

wrong path, who clouded my mind and stole my peace… He will pay. Not by my hand. I… I no longer carry that burden… I'll leave it to God, and the state will find him…

He opened his eyes and looked straight ahead, no hatred left, only surrender.
— God has him in His hands. He will exact justice, — he added calmly. — And that is enough for me.
Then he closed his eyes slowly. His breathing steadied, the tension left his face, and for the first time in many long, anxious nights, he fell into a peaceful sleep, as if he had finally found the missing peace.
In Albania – The Fear of the Elites
When news of Arben's innocence spread, panic erupted in political circles. Offices closed in a rush, phones rang nonstop, and impromptu meetings became scenes of nervousness and fear.
— Don't open the case! — shouted a high-ranking official in a closed meeting, pounding the table. — Don't let our names surface in Turkey again… Old files, long dead, should stay dead!
A heavy silence followed, until someone dared to speak:
— And Bac? What will we do with him?
The official leaned forward, a cold smile on his lips.
— Let him do whatever he wants, as long as he doesn't return here. Let him eat grass in Turkey. The farther away, the better.

But beyond the panic behind closed, armored doors,

something else was happening in the streets. Ordinary people began to speak differently, quietly but with awareness.

— Poor Elira… — someone murmured in a neighborhood café.

— And Arben? — added another. — They drove him insane.

— It's a shame, — said an elderly man, shaking his head.

— They can't even protect the best people we have, — a woman at the back of the café concluded.

In cafés, buses, streets, and store lines, their names circulated from mouth to mouth. No longer rumors, but a slowly awakening consciousness. For the first time in a long time, the truth was spoken not by those in power, but by the people.

After all, in this country, someone's love often ended in drama.

Captain Ardit Hoxha walked slowly through the psychiatric hospital corridor, each heavy step carrying a fragile man toward the light after long darkness. A young nurse guided him to Room 27 and knocked lightly.

— He's calmer today, Captain… — she said. — He's been talking about Elira… and what happened to him.

Ardit lowered his head and took a deep breath. He didn't want his uniform to signal police authority; he wanted this visit to be human, as someone who had seen much suffering and resolved to deliver justice.

The nurse opened the door and stepped inside. Arben sat by the window. A faded blanket covered his shoulders, but

his trembling hands held Elira's photo tightly. He looked at it carefully, as if it were a piece of his soul, oxygen he could not lose.

Hearing footsteps in the corridor, he raised his head fearfully, but the captain's calm gaze eased some of his turmoil.

— Ardit…? — he asked in a weak, trembling voice. — Is that you?

— Yes, Arben. I'm here, — Ardit said, sitting slowly beside the bed. — I came to see you and to tell you the truth.

Arben stared, the silence heavy. Then he spoke, confused:

— They told me… that she was in danger. They told me to do everything… But I… I only loved her… only wanted to protect her…

He held the photo tightly. Tears ran slowly, silently. Ardit placed a hand on his shoulder.

— Arben… You're not guilty. They used you. They manipulated him, pushed him toward madness. You only wanted to protect the one you loved. Arben's eyes lit up with a spark of hope.

— D… does she know? Will she forgive me…? — he asked, his voice trembling slightly.

— She knows, — Ardit said warmly. — She has publicly asked for your rehabilitation. She has spoken of your innocence and of your love. She will not hate you.

Arben covered his face with his hands. His body shook gently. His beloved was far away, but his heart refused to stop loving.

— Just don't bring her any more pain… — he whispered.

— She doesn't deserve it…
Ardit smiled softly and lightly rested a hand on his shoulder.
— You won't hurt her. And one day, when you're ready, you'll be able to communicate with her. You'll be honest with her. And free. You'll be able to speak about the love you have for her, Arben.

Arben held the photo to his chest and closed his eyes. For the first time in weeks, he felt a measure of peace. In that white room, amid the medicines and pale corridors, a broken man was returning to his life, protected by love and the care of someone just.
The Escape and Pursuit of Bac Dhelpra — Turkey: Shadows That Don't Fade
Three months earlier, Bac Dhelpra had crossed the border into Turkey. A small hotel on the outskirts of Izmir served as a temporary hideout. He paced nervously from room to room, slowly, watching every window and door. Every shadow outside seemed like a threat; every sound made him press against the walls. Now he was the shadow… Fear and paranoia were consuming him just as they had Arben.
— They can't catch me… They can't… — he whispered to himself. — But I know Arben… That doctor… I destroyed his life, but he won't escape like this.
He was no longer the same. He couldn't be reported. He couldn't testify. Technically speaking… he couldn't give evidence. He wasn't normal. This wasn't testimony…

Then he added, louder, almost defiant:
— I'm not afraid… I'm not afraid!

He spoke to himself constantly, and his trembling voice filled the room.

But the fear was no longer just a distant feeling. When he turned on the television to check the world's news, the screen was flooded with photos of Arben—smiling, innocent. The Albanian police report was blunt and clear:
"Arben Kodra is innocent. The charges were manipulated. Foreign services used him."
Bac looked up, his face illuminated by both anger and fear. He realized immediately: the game was over for him, at least for now.
The Pursuit from Albania
In Tirana, Captain Ardit Hoxha never stopped. Every piece of information, every photo, every trace of Bac had been analyzed. He had contacted Turkish authorities and Interpol. A silent network was deployed to track his movements.
— He won't be able to hide, — Ardit said, studying maps of Izmir and possible routes. — No port, no hotel is safe for him.
Officer Iliri added:
— And Arben? He's safe now, Captain?
— Yes, — Ardit said. — But his love for Elira is stronger than any threat. This man has suffered so much, and we must make sure nothing harms him again.

Arben and Elira's Photo

Meanwhile, in the hospital, Arben held Elira's photo to his chest, whispering softly— You are my light… even when everything else abandoned me. Even when darkness closed off all paths and silence weighed on my back like guilt I never earned. You will always be my light.

Even though I've done nothing wrong. My only mistake was trust. They used me, pushed me to the brink, left me to carry the weight of their sins.But I… I stayed here, stripped of every protection, only with my truth. And with my love for you. Because even when they denied me my name, even when they broke my dignity, my feeling for you did not fade. It survived like a small light at the end of my soul— unshakable, stubborn.

I love you not irresponsibly, but as proof that I am still human. I love you because in you, I found what the world denied me: justice, peace, and the reason not to become what they wanted me to be. If I have survived, it is because you are my light—Even when everything else abandoned me, you remained within me.

The nurses watched in awe and respect. This was not a madman, but a man wounded by love and betrayal.

— I will live, — he whispered. — For myself. — For Elira. Only for her…

He closed his eyes and let the tears flow—free and calm. Her photo was the only thing that could soothe his heart.

The Invisible Connection

Despite the distance and the cold walls that made silence even heavier, their connection remained unbroken. No

loud words were needed, no handwritten promises that could be lost along the way. A silent message, a secret prayer rising into the darkness, and a small photo held to the chest—beating in rhythm with his own heart.

That photo was more than a memory; it was proof that hope still lived.

Every night, Arben clutched that image as if it were a shield against despair. In that piece of paper was Elira—not just her face, but the promise that truth could never be imprisoned forever. Far away, in another space, she felt his presence without seeing it. An inexplicable sense told her he was not broken, that their love had taken the shape of patience.

God, in turn, was the invisible pillar sustaining this connection. He was the shield between Arben and injustice, the quiet voice reminding him that his innocence was not merely a personal conviction, but a proven truth. With simple words and steadfast presence, God helped Arben understand that everything he endured had an end, and that the light had not gone out.

In this triangle of silence, trust, and love, nothing snapped. Because some bonds are unseen, untouchable, yet stronger than any chains. And that bond—Invisible to the world—was the reason they kept breathing, kept waiting, and kept believing that truth and love would, sooner or later, triumph.

Arben's Letter:

"My beloved Elira,

Every day without you is a piece of sky that has lost its

light. Every night without you is a cold wind slapping my face with bitter memories. There isn't a day I don't think about your smile, your voice calming me, and the way I felt your presence even when you weren't there.They used me, lied to me, and all around me pushed me into a shadow where I lost myself. But my heart—my heart was always yours. It has never forgotten your love, and it never will."
The city never stopped. He spied on the pain of individuals. He lived for the grand story, for monuments, for power, and for collective memory. Elira knew this. With a cup of black coffee in hand, she stood by the window, watching the calm flow of the Potomac. The water moved forward without looking back, while her mind did the opposite:
It flew far away, to her homeland, where fate had changed everything without asking permission.
Every day she traveled by subway and bus, learning not only the streets but also the unwritten codes of the city. Every sign, every monument, every plaque was a fragment of a new geography to be patiently conquered. People saw her as a successful journalist, a familiar face on television screens, a woman who had achieved everything. But no one saw the void she carried inside, filled with memories, with names no longer spoken, and with dreams suspended in time.
In the studio, her voice was clear and confident. She spoke of politics, of justice, of decisions that altered the fates of nations. Cameras loved her, editors trusted her. But behind every measured word, behind every cool analysis, her mind drifted elsewhere. It always returned to Arbeni — the

doctor who had seen it all, who had believed in people, and who had been broken by them. It returned to wounds that medicine could not heal and to a love that survived only in silence.

Washington never slept. Neither did Elira.

A Foreign City and the Language of Silence

Washington was a city that talked a lot but rarely revealed its soul. Elira understood this within her first months. People walked fast, eyes glued to their phones, agendas filled, faces disciplined, as if every smile had been pre-signed.

No one asked who you really were. What mattered was only what you represented at that moment: a title, a role, an institutional ID. She learned this unwritten language—the Language of Silence.

"Don't ask too much," she told herself every morning before leaving the house.

"Don't reveal too much," her inner voice repeated as she tied her shoes.

At first, this way of life felt cold. Then, without noticing, she began to accept it. She walked at the city's pace. She didn't linger too long on feelings. She didn't let her thoughts wander too far.

On the subway, amid the screech of brakes and metallic announcements, she studied the faces around her. Everyone seemed busy, important, yet deep down, lonely.

"Am I like them too?" she asked herself.

"Have I become part of this silent restlessness?"

No one answered.
At night, when Washington stayed awake with its official lights and diplomatic silence, Elira felt her thoughts spoke louder than people. Where words were absent, memories began knocking.
"Don't weaken," she whispered to herself.
"Here, weakness has no place."
Yet, in the quiet of her apartment, far from the city's hum, she knew a person could not always move forward without pausing. And Washington, with all its discipline, could not hide that truth.

Every morning, as she descended the subway stairs, she heard the metallic roar of trains and voices mixed in dozens of languages. There she truly felt far from home. The Albanian language came to her like a distant echo, an old song only she remembered. Occasionally, a foreign word felt cold, weak, incapable of bearing the weight of the pain she carried with her.
At the newsroom, Elira was precise, professional, almost cold. Colleagues respected her discipline and investigative courage. She spoke little of herself. When asked where she was from, she smiled lightly and answered briefly, as if her past were a well-locked file in a drawer. But in the evenings, returning to her sweet apartment, the silence of the walls returned everything.
Her apartment was simple: a bed, a work table, scattered books, and some old documents she had never discarded.

They were evidence of another life, of a battle unfinished. In that warm space, Elira removed the mask of the television journalist and remained only a woman, only human.
Often, she sat by the window, watching the city lights. Each light seemed to carry a story, but none belonged to her. Her mind wandered back to Arbeni. She wondered where he was, if he had any good days, if he still remembered her voice. Questions with no answers, kept alive only by the fragile hope she dared not extinguish completely.

On screen, she was a symbol of success. In reality, she was a woman who had learned to live with absence. Washington had given her a career but taken her warmth. And Elira, amid monuments and laws, realized there existed a loneliness deeper than that of her homeland: the loneliness of someone who has succeeded but lost what mattered most.
She turned off the light and lay down. The city continued to buzz outside. Inside her, another night began — one where memories spoke louder than any news.

The New City and the Foreign Life
At every square she passed, Elira felt the contrast between Washington and her homeland. Spaces were wide, orderly; monuments rose grand but cold, like memories without feelings. Stones and marble preserved the history of a modern empire but said nothing about ordinary people. She sensed that here everything was precise but slightly distant, as if the city was built more to be admired than to

be lived in.
People moved in a rush, immersed in their own rhythm, each with a clear purpose. Elira observed faces, gestures, silences. Over time, she had learned to read not only the street maps but also the signs of people: who spoke sincerely, who played the power game, who hid fear behind practiced smiles. This was a city where masks changed quickly but rarely fell.

She often stopped in a park or café, opening her notebook. She wrote without overthinking, as if to prevent her thoughts from escaping. Every sentence, every observation, was part of a larger investigation — not only professional but deeply personal. She sought to understand the world around her, but in truth, she was trying to understand herself, her place in a city that had accepted her but not yet embraced her.
At night, she retreated to her apartment, where books and old documents she brought from Albania were like relics of another life. They were evidence of a city still living within her, with its noise, chaos, and pain. Touching those pages, she felt she was touching the past, momentarily reclaiming what she had lost.
She met different people: ambitious young colleagues, politicians speaking in measured sentences, foreign journalists watching her with curiosity. Some admired her courage and persistence; others… They underestimated her, seeing her as a voice from a small country. Elira accepted it all calmly. She had learned that success does

not fill the inner void; it only covers it temporarily, like a bright light hiding the shadows without erasing them. And when she was alone, far from cameras and noise, she understood that living abroad was not simply about a new place. It was a state of mind, where a person learns to move forward while carrying everything inside that they cannot leave behind.

Arbeni, the Man Stuck in Time

Arbeni lived in a time that no longer moved forward. His days were flat, each one blending into the next, with no clear boundary between morning and night. After three years in the hospital—three years of walls, artificial light, and restrained voices—he had learned not to trust the clock. Time for him was no longer measured in minutes, but in pain and false calm.Rehabilitation had almost returned him to the doctor he had once been. His hands trembled less, his mind was clearer, but his spirit remained exhausted. There were days when he felt strong, capable of returning, and days when everything seemed pointless. Memories arrived without warning, like sudden blows, knocking him silently back down.
He knew fate had broken him—not only the illness, but also injustice, fear, and abandonment. He had been a respected doctor, a known name, a man who believed in science and in people. Then everything had turned upside down. The institution meant to heal had destroyed him. The hospital had become a prison, and he an invisible inmate.

At night, when the corridors quieted and the lights dimmed, Arbeni closed his eyes and saw Elira. In dreams, she came calm, with the same eyes, with a voice he had never forgotten. There, he felt human again, loved again. She spoke to him without questions, without excessive pity, just as she had once.
"I'm still here," she told him in the dream.
"I am too," he replied, even though he knew it wasn't true.
Waking was always hard. The white room, the narrow bed, the distant sounds brought him back to reality. He clenched his hands and tried to hold on to the dream, as if it were the only thing still belonging to him.
Far away, in another city, Elira was living her new life. Arbeni didn't know what she looked like now, but he felt she still existed. And that fragile, painful feeling was what kept him alive.
He was a man stuck in time, but love does not obey time. She continued to exist only in dreams—and perhaps that was her purest form.

A Shared Dream

The night brought them together when the day kept them apart. Elira did not always know when the dream began and reality ended. Some nights, sheer exhaustion collapsed her into sleep without thought; on others, her body slept while her mind remained awake, searching for Arbeni in the dark.

In the dream, everything was quieter. No foreign cities, no hospitals, no cameras, no news. It was only the two of them, in a nameless, timeless space. Elira saw Arbeni as she once had: calm, steady, with eyes that spoke louder than words. Her heart raced every time he drew near.

"I thought you had forgotten me," she said one night, her voice trembling slightly.

"You never forget the one who kept you alive," Arbeni replied.

They walked side by side, without touching, as if an invisible line separated them. Elira wanted to reach out, but something stopped her. She knew that if she touched him, the dream would break.

"Why only here?" she asked. "Why only in sleep?"

Arbeni lowered his eyes.

"Because no one judges us here. No diagnoses, no decisions. Only us."

In that silent world, their words flowed slowly, like calm water. They spoke of things never spoken aloud: fear, guilt, love left unresolved. Elira told him about her life in Washington, about the success that did not bring happiness. Arbeni spoke of long nights, of days he felt invisible.

"I have always loved you," he finally said. "Even when I was no longer myself."

Elira felt tears fill her eyes.

"Me too. But our love remains unfinished, like a sentence left incomplete."

The moment she dared to look him straight in the eye, the light dimmed. Everything began to fade. She felt herself waking.

Elira rose in bed, heart pounding. The room was dark, the city outside buzzing lightly. She knew Arbeni was far away, perhaps waking from the same dream. Two people, two cities, one love that lived only where reality could not reach.

The dream was both refuge and wound. They never became a couple in real life, yet every night they reunited in a world where fate had no power. Two hearts met too early and lost each other too quickly; life stole reality but could not erase feeling. Lost love is the love never lived, yet it continues to awaken you each morning stronger than reality itself.

The Hospital as Wound and Symbol

The hospital was no longer a place of healing. It was an open wound, intentionally left unhealed. Its walls still carried the scent of old disinfectant, but beneath it lay the rot of an entire system. Broken windows, dim corridors, and rusty equipment spoke louder than any official report. Where lives were once saved, now people entered with fear—or didn't enter at all.

After Dr. Mentor's team left, everything deteriorated. Modernization remained on paper, plans were forgotten, funds vanished. The hospital reverted to a soulless public building, where responsibility was always unclear, and blame had no name. No one was held accountable. Only the patients paid the price.

Nurses worked on delayed wages; the most skilled doctors left or were forced into silence. Those who remained

learned to survive—not to heal, but to survive. Every day was a new compromise with conscience. Every corridor a reminder that the system had failed methodically, not by accident.

Arbeni paid the highest price. He was broken not only by disease but by the institution meant to protect him. The hospital swallowed him, isolated him, forgot him. When he left, he was no longer the same man. He was living proof that unchecked power can destroy not only buildings but minds, careers, and love.

From afar, Elira followed this story as a journalist—but also as a human involved. Every document she read, every testimony she collected, felt like another wound opening. She realized the hospital was only one case; the true symbol was the state that had abandoned its citizens. A state where public institutions became private property, where health and justice were commodities.

The story was no longer just personal—it had become an indictment. Elira knew she was entering territory… Dangerous Territory

To touch the hospital was to touch interests, names, power. But silence was complicity. And she could no longer remain silent.

The hospital remained there—a silent building, yet loud to those who knew how to listen. It was a wound in a country never healed from its past, and a symbol of a present that continued to produce pain.

And somewhere, among documents and dreams, between lost love and uncovered truth, the story took a turn with no return.

The Red Shadows and Bac Dhelpra's Asylum

The red shadows didn't disappear with punishments. They simply changed shape. Some withdrew into silence, some scattered into other offices, and some hid behind new laws that carried the same old spirit. The system had learned these moves well: survive by appearing to change.

In public opinion, people spoke of justice, of cleansing, of a new chapter. In reality, only the tip of the iceberg had been touched. The heaviest files remained closed; the most powerful names were mentioned but never called to account. The shadows continued to exist—unseen, but active.

Bac Dhelpra's escape was the clearest proof. He did not flee out of fear of punishment, but from the conviction that justice was drawing too close. His escape was carefully planned, thought out long in advance. One night, without noise, without lights, without words, he—carrying a small suitcase with carefully arranged documents—suddenly found the road open to Turkey.

There, he presented himself as a victim—a politically persecuted man. His file was carefully constructed: selected confessions, distorted facts, deliberate silences. And the asylum system, blind to moral nuance, accepted his story. Bac Dhelpra gained the status that ensured his survival—but not peace of mind.

Life in Turkey was new only on the surface. Every morning he awoke with a sense of anxiety, every sound felt like a step behind him. He knew he hadn't truly escaped—he had only run. Memory was his harshest punishment. At

night, the red shadows he had used appeared as ghosts that would not let him sleep.

Elira understood that Bac Dhelpra's story was more than an individual escape. It was the model of an era: those who harmed the system fled and were called victims; those who resisted remained. She handled the story carefully, without direct names, but with facts that spoke for themselves. Her report became a mirror of a painful reality.

When Arbeni heard about the asylum, he smiled bitterly.

"Dhelpra always finds a hideout," he said quietly.But in his eyes, there was neither triumph nor rage. Only fatigue.

The red shadows continued to live—perhaps quieter, perhaps more cautious. But what they had destroyed could not return: trust. And without trust, any institution was just an empty building—like the hospital, still crumbling day by day.

The story I have told is nearing its end—not with grand victories, but with bitter truths. And perhaps this was the most honest ending possible.

Washington continued to wake early. Every morning, Elira walked the same streets among tall buildings and timeless monuments. Her life was orderly, filled with reports, news, voices that demanded to be heard. She had achieved everything that once seemed impossible. Her name was known, her word carried weight. But some victories did not bring peace.

In the studio, she spoke with confidence. In the evenings, she remained silent. From her apartment window, the city

lights turned into cold stars. Her mind went to Arbeni—not with anxiety and questions, but with a painful calm, like a wound that no longer hurts, yet never fully heals.
Arbeni lived in silence. He no longer sought answers. His days passed slowly, with old books and short walks. Few people knew him, and he made no attempt to explain himself. He had learned to live with loss, to hold it inside without letting it out. Silence was his way of surviving.
Sometimes, at night, he saw Elira in dreams. She was always calm, unchanged, as if time could not touch her. They spoke little. There were no more questions. Only presence—a closeness that needed no explanation.
Even Elira, in her long nights, felt the same. A repeated, gentle dream where Arbeni was exactly as he had always been. There were no hospitals, no escapes, no punishments. Only two people who had loved each other in the only way allowed.
They never became a couple in life. Fate had divided their paths across continents, across different silences. But their love did not die. It remained where reality had no power—in dreams.

And perhaps this was the last form of salvation: accepting that some loves are not meant to be lived, only kept alive in silence, until the end.
Bac and the Consequences of Breaking the Law
Bac, former chairman of Shiku, had always been a man who knew how to manipulate situations. He used power for personal gain, undermining the democratic movement,

distorting truth, and creating fear among citizens. For years, his influence destroyed careers, closed opportunities, and built a system where the guilty remained untouchable.
When justice began to approach, Bac realized the game was over. It was not just the loss of power; it was the warning that every action he had taken had consequences. He organized his departure carefully, at night, without alerting anyone. Turkey became his new refuge. There, he sought and gained political asylum, presenting himself as persecuted—a victim of an unjust system.
But life in Turkey was no complete salvation. Every step reminded him of the damage he had caused. He knew countless people, ideas, and causes had been broken by his actions. The democratic party he had opposed remained in opposition. Everything he had touched had been severely harmed. His image—once powerful and feared—now remained only as an invisible figure, hiding behind documents and asylum laws.

On Istanbul's streets, amid the crowds and lights, he walked without leaving traces. No one recognized him. He was free, but isolated. No allies, no secure power. Asylum spared him punishment, but not conscience. Every night, when the city's silence covered the streets, the memory of those he had harmed turned all his actions into indelible marks.
And while Bac lived in another land, the history he had created remained behind: wounds in the hospital, damage to the democratic movement, red shadows that had never fully disappeared. He had gained survival,

but not redemption. And perhaps that was the harshest punishment: his freedom was simple, but the weight of the past followed him everywhere.

Bac, former chairman of Shiku, was not just a name erased by asylum. He was a symbol of a system that had destroyed people's hope. For years, his actions had instilled fear, normalized manipulation and spying, and uprooted the democracy that should have flourished. Every decision made people move cautiously, stifling new initiatives, leaving behind pain that could not heal.

When justice began to close in, Bac realized he had no protection left. He did not wait for punishment to find him. He meticulously organized his escape, leaving behind everything: name, power, the familiar office desk. Turkey became his new asylum, and the documents proving political persecution secured his external freedom. But internal freedom remained absent. The memory of those he harmed—and all the wounds he had caused—followed him everywhere.

The hospital, once a place of healing, was now a half-ruined building, a symbol of destruction begun by the red shadows' actions. Arbeni, who had suffered within its walls, felt that every step Bac took in asylum was a new blow for all who had trusted the system. The damage to the democratic movement could not be healed, even as justice had made a step forward.

From afar, Elira kept records. Every report on Bac Dhelpra's asylum was proof that all actions, however hidden, leave traces. She understood that such stories do not end simply

with the culprit's escape. Consequences remain; society's wounds are not healed by laws alone, and damaged democracy requires more than individual punishments.

Bac now lived in another city, but everything he had created followed him. He was free from punishment, but not from the memory of the collective he had harmed. Istanbul's streets—though wide and busy—were for him like the hospital corridors: narrow, filled with ghosts of the past, surrounded by shadows he could not escape.

As Arbeni and Elira continued their lives in different cities, the ripple effects of Bac's actions connected them all. He was far away, but his presence was always here: in the silence of the hospital, in the hesitation of justice, in the hearts of those who believed and suffered.

Thus, the story of Bac Dhelpra, the red shadows, and the asylum became a warning: freedom can be won with documents and passports, but responsibility and conscience can never be escaped. Power must know that every action, every harm, leaves traces that remain alive.The hospital remained half-ruined. Plans for modernization, new equipment, trained staff—all forgotten like a dream extinguished. The city kept moving forward, but the wounds inside it, the wounds of the people who had passed through its halls, remained open. The white walls no longer healed; they simply carried the scent of old, silent, painful memories.

The public had forgotten the history the hospital had held. Documents, files, and reports exposing corruption, violations, and suffering were left in secret archives. Only

a few names lingered in the memory of a few people: Arbeni, Elira, and those who had survived the chaos. The building—a symbol of a failed system—had become a place where nothing changed, where everything was stolen without control, and where life continued for others, untouched by the pain of the past.

For many citizens, the hospital was just another building on the horizon, a part of the city that no one noticed. But for those who had seen, felt, and endured every wound, it remained a living memory: a place where life and death, injustice and courage, love and loss collided without compromise.

Its cracked walls spoke for those who had fought for justice and for those who had fled in silence. Every room, every corridor, still echoed with cries and pain—a silent symphony no one listened to. Yet the building stood, a reminder that history cannot be completely erased, even when modernization and power choose to forget.

Those who survived, like Arbeni and Elira, carried this memory within them. Every step, every place they visited, brought them back to the wounds of the past. But where the hospital could no longer heal, their hearts had found other ways to cope: through memory, through silence, through dreams that could not be extinguished.

And so, as the city grew and new buildings rose from the ruins, the hospital remained a symbol of forgotten pain—a wound that would never heal, yet also a testament to the strength of those brave enough to face it.

The Elusive Dream

Washington, night. Elira stands by her apartment window. Her phone is off, but her mind is with Arbeni.
Elira (quietly, often speaking to herself):
"Arbeni… what would it be like if we could be together? In a world with no hospitals, no escapes, no red shadows…"
A moment of silence. At the same time, in another city, Arbeni rests his head over an old book and smiles bitterly.
Arbeni (to himself):
"Elira… everything we never had, everything that separated us… I find only in dreams."

At night, in their shared dream, they meet. No long words are needed—silence speaks through their eyes.
Elira:
"Arbeni… you're alive… here, with me."
Arbeni:
"Yes… here, no hospital, no red shadow, no pain separating us. Just us."

Elira:
"And the morning… it always returns us to our separate worlds."
Arbeni (holding her hand):
"Distance cannot separate us when we dream together. Dreams are where everything is possible."
Elira:
"But is dreaming enough, Arbeni? Is it enough to love someone only in silence?"
Arbeni:

"Sometimes, yes. If we keep it pure, untouched by time, by pain, by injustice… then our love remains eternal."

They smile softly, a mixture of longing and joy. Night fades.
Elira:
"One day… maybe not in this world. But here, in our dream, we will always be together."

Arbeni:
"Always, Elira… always."City lights flicker on, marking the return to reality. Elira turns back to her window, Arbeni lowers his head over the book. Both feel the same emptiness, yet a strange peace: their love can never truly fade.

Washington, night.
Elira stands by the window. The city lights stretch below like a cold neon sea; the streets nearly empty, silent, without rhythm. The cool glass touches her forehead as she speaks to herself—a silent call to Arbeni.
Elira (quietly):
"Arbeni… how I miss what we never had. Every day here is a step toward success, but the heart… the heart remains empty."

In another city, secluded in solitude, Arbeni stays awake, head over an old book. The yellowed pages go unread. His mind returns relentlessly to the hospital, its cold corridors, and the red shadows that never left him. These are no

longer mere memories—they are marks etched deep in conscience, stains time cannot wash away.
In silence, he speaks to himself, as if addressing her soul.
Arbeni (to himself):
"Elira… every wound I saw inside there is you. Every red shadow reminds me of you. Only in dreams have I found peace."

And there, in the space where pain had no power, they meet. In their shared dream, a quiet street appears—no noise, no passersby, no windows watching. The city ceases to exist; it is erased like an unnecessary memory.Elira reaches for his hand, as if to convince herself he is real.
Elira:
"You're alive… here, with me."

Arbeni:
"Yes… here, no hospital, no red shadow, no pain. Only us. Only this silence, speaking louder than any word."
They walk slowly along the empty street, time frozen as if it forgot to continue. Every step a small liberation, every breath a silent promise.
Elira:
"And the morning always returns us to our separate worlds… Sometimes it feels impossible."
Arbeni:
"Distance has no power here. No time can separate us. Dreams are the place where everything can happen."

Elira pauses, looking at him with gentle sadness, a question long unspoken.
Elira:
"But is dreaming enough? Is it enough to love someone only in silence?"
Arbeni looks straight into her eyes, fearless, unwavering.
"More than enough. Because here, our love is pure—untouched by pain, by time, or injustice. Here, we are not wounds, we are healing."
Elira remains silent for a moment, then smiles softly, like someone who knows dawn is near.
Elira:
"If this is the only way to be together, then let us never fully wake. Let us live between two worlds, until reality finds us stronger." They continued walking, hand in hand, as the alley slowly faded into the light—a light that promised the coming dawn but could not destroy what they had built in silence.

"I think this is the only way to preserve what we had… Reality can't come back, but this… this is eternal."

A slow silence filled the air. They felt close to each other, even knowing that morning would separate them again.

Arbeni: "Elira… Even if we can't be together in this world, every night I will meet you here. No force can take this from us."
Elira: "Yes… always, Arbeni… always."

A silent, painful smile enveloped them. They walked together in the darkness, speaking without words, feeling every memory, every scar marked in their souls.

In other nights, the dream changed slightly, but they always found each other in the same place, speaking of all they could not say in reality.

Elira: "I'm afraid everything will be forgotten… the hospital, the pain, every fight for justice."
Arbeni: "Forgetting can take everything outside, but not here. Here we have our memory, here we are free. Every wound we carried, every loss, every victory—these are ours, only in this place."
Elira: "And our love… it will never die."
Arbeni: "Never…"

They stood in silence, staring at the dark sky. The distant city lights shone like quiet stars, keeping the traces of their dream alive.

Elira (smiling): "Maybe this is the best way to keep alive what could not exist in reality."
Arbeni: "A place between dream and reality… where we are always together."And so, as night continued and the cities sank into silence, Elira and Arbeni found peace in a love untouched by time, power, or forgetting. Only dreams kept alive what could not live in reality.

Elira (speaking softly to herself): “Everything here seems perfect… But inside me, everything is empty. What would have happened if we were together, Arbeni? If there were no hospital, no red shadows, no power destroying everything?”
In another city, Arbeni lowered his head over his old books, feeling the same longing.Arbeni (to himself): “Elira… every step I took after those days, you were there. In all the silence I kept, you were always inside me. Everything brings me back to you. Only in dreams with you do I find peace…”
In the world of dreams, they walked along a quiet alley. The air was warm, their city silent, without the white walls of the hospital or the red shadows that haunted everything. Every dream was shared with her.

In the end, they were dreams. Not reality. At least there, they had free meetings. No one followed them. No shadows, no guards. Nothing could stop them from being together, living in this nightly dream.
“It’s unbelievable… to be here with you, with nothing dividing us.”
Arbeni: “No one can separate us here. This is our world, Elira. Just us and the silence that speaks louder than any words.”
Elira: “And the morning always returns us to reality. Distances, cities, the real world…”
Arbeni (smiling slightly): “Nothing can stop this. Even in the real world, we are connected… even in silence, even in memory.”

They were near an imagined river, city lights reflecting on calm waters… in the paradise of dreams that could never become reality.Elira: "I'm afraid one day everything will be forgotten. The hospital, the pain, the fight for justice… every hard step we took together, as if it never existed."
Arbeni: "Forgetting can take everything from the outside, Elira—names, dates, walls. But not this." (He touches his chest.) "In this place of dreams we carry inside us, every wound, every loss, every victory is ours. They do not disappear; they simply turn into memory that keeps us alive."They walked hand in hand. In the image created by their dream, the night's silence slowly wrapped around them like an invisible shield, where pain ceased its cries and hope learned to breathe.
Elira: "And our love… it will never die?"
Arbeni: "We will never be forgotten, Elira. Even when everything else fades, our love will remain a light. Never… it will never disappear."
Late at night, dreams endure. A deep calm filled the air. They felt safe in this place, free from every worry, protected from all kinds of physical or political pain.
Elira: "It's incredible… how a dream can be more real than any reality we've ever lived."
Arbeni: "Because this is the only thing untouched by time, by power, by pain… a place between dream and reality, where we are always together."
Distant city lights shone like silent stars, keeping the traces of their love. Every night they met there, every night they preserved what could not live in reality.

Elira (looking out the window in Washington): "Even though the world outside continues to live in the chaos of impossibilities, here in the world of dreams… everything is possible. Here, our love can never be extinguished." The Punishment of the Red Shadow and Bac the Fox

Arbeni slowly lowered himself onto the open book, as if the pages could offer him temporary shelter. He closed his eyes, and his breathing calmed. His voice faded into silence, but the words hung in the air.

Arbeni (to himself): "Always… always we will be together. In silence, in light, in our dream."

But his mind would not accept peace. Other memories returned—heavier, darker. The punishment of the Red Shadow, which had left open wounds, and the escape of Bac the Fox to Turkey—an escape that was never salvation.

Arbeni: "Bac the Fox… he's gone. He ran from justice, but not from the pain he left behind. He became cruel to those who fought for justice, to the true democrats, and to countless innocent people. He thought the borders would save him. But he could never escape my memories."

That red shadow was no longer just a symbol of violence; it was a collective wound. And Elira, even from afar, felt its weight.

The pain endured remained as a punishment. It appeared in her dreams; every day, Elira awoke with an emptiness she could not name. Arbeni realized that what weighed on her was not only his own pain—it was the pain of everyone who had been hurt in silence and left behind in oblivion.

Elira: "Every night I feel that emptiness. It's not just for us… it's for all those who were hurt, who were forgotten."
Arbeni: "Yes. And nothing can heal it completely. Reality has declared them lost. Only dreams can keep them alive—as memory, as testimony, as hope." They meet again in their shared dream. A quiet lane stretches before them, wrapped in nature and silence. The city no longer exists. There is no noise, no power, no fear.

Elira: "I want to know… is love enough only in a dream?"
Arbeni: "Yes. In this world, it is pure, untouched. Here there are no mistakes, no losses, no power."

Elira: "It's unbelievable… how a dream can feel more real than any reality we've lived."
Arbeni: "Because this is the one thing time and pain cannot touch. A place between dream and reality—where we are always together."

Intimate moments in the dream

Night. The silent lanes create a world just for them. Distant lights spill over the calm waters of the river, like memories unwilling to fade. The air is warm, saturated with the scent of lost times.

Elira takes Arbeni's hand. Their fingers intertwine without fear, as if nothing else exists.
Elira: "You're here… and everything feels like it used to.

There are no wounds here. No pain divides us."
Arbeni smiles gently, with a calm he does not know in the real world.
Arbeni: "Yes… only us, Elira. This is the only world where we are free. No hospitals, no power, no red shadows."

They walk slowly along the narrow lane. Hands linked, deep gazes speak louder than words.
Elira: "I miss every day we weren't together… every moment we lost."

Arbeni pauses and looks directly into her eyes.
Arbeni: "But here, there is no loss. All the lost are found here, with us. Every smile, every touch is eternal. Nothing is false between us. We are truly in love… forever."

They stop by a small bridge. Below, the water reflects the light of the night. Arbeni draws Elira closer.
Arbeni: "Look… every night we can return here. No reality can separate us."

Elira rests her forehead against his chest.
Elira: "Here I can touch you. Feel what reality has denied us."

They fall silent. A small smile. A gentle brush of fingers—full of longing and unseen love. Reality pulls Elira back…
Elira: "Even though morning returns us to our separate worlds… here we are always together."

Arbeni: "Always, Elira. Here our love is untouched."

Here is their unseen world, together forever.
The night stretches quietly over the dream city. They walk hand in hand, holding every moment—because reality may wake them, but it cannot take what they've built in silence.
Arbeni: "Here there are no limits. No hospital, no red shadows, nothing that can separate us."
They cross the small bridge, but the bridge is no longer made of stone. It hovers above the calm river like a line of light, while the water below does not flow—it remembers. The lights do not come from the city lamps, but from the air itself, as if the night is illuminated by their breathing. Each step does not take them forward, but deeper.

Elira: "I want to feel it all… Not as a body, but as memory. Every smile never spoken, every gaze left suspended, every breath reality denied us."

Arbeni does not speak immediately. His voice comes from an inner distance.
Arbeni: "Because this is no longer a real world. It is the space between two thoughts. Here feelings are not hurt. They simply exist."
They stop facing each other. Their eyes do not reflect faces, but light. A touch of fingers is enough to open an invisible current between them. Perhaps only loves that transcend human limits achieve this glow—not because they are supernatural—but because they are freed from the fear of loss.

Elira lifts her eyes. The sky has no stars; it has memories that pulse slowly.
Elira: "This is more real than life… How can a dream make us feel more than reality?"
Arbeni smiles, but his smile is no longer on his face—it is in his voice.
Arbeni: "Because reality demands proof. A dream only asks for trust. Here there are no mistakes, Elira. No losses. Only continuation."
The surrounding lanes are not roads. They are memories never lived, but still seeking a body. Light follows them gently, as if the dream itself does not want to let them go.
Elira: "Everything we never had… was taken before we could live it."
Arbeni stops. Time stops with him.
Arbeni: "Nothing was taken. What is true does not disappear. It only moves. And we have moved here."
They continue walking—or perhaps they remain still. In this place, walking and staying are the same.
The dream slowly closes around them, not as an ending, but as a promise. All our joys, our love—they were taken by the heartless, the immoral, by the red shadows of communism. But we are together. We have always been together. Here, nothing is lost. Every wound we carried, every pain… is ours, kept here in silence and light.
They stop by a small dreamlike lake. The reflection of the lights on the calm water makes them feel eternity.
Elira: "Look… everything is calm, everything is possible. Why must reality always be so painful?"

Arbeni: "Because here, in this place between dream and reality, we find everything the real world denies us. Our love, without limits, without pain."
Elira: "And this is the only way to keep our love alive… untouched and eternal."
They touch each other gently; every touch is like a silent word that says everything. They walk hand in hand along the dream's paths, speaking and silent at the same time. Every gaze is deep, every smile warm.
The earth is no longer a place of love, but a battlefield among the same creatures. It is aggressive and deadly. Like in the morning… where everything returns to… "Reality… but here… we are untouchable."

How wonderful it is to be in this unreal world, where these dhampirs cannot bite us. We are in our own world of eternal love. We will always find each other. Here there is no hospital, no red shadow, no pain… only us.

They hold each other in the dream, in another three-dimensional reality,
and in a long silence that fills the night. There… they feel a calm they have never known outside the dream.

Elira: "Our dream is stronger than any reality. Here our love cannot be extinguished…"

Light always follows darkness. It is physical reality. We will wait for that reality… here in this city… in Washington, the city of love, as we will call it.

They walk along a small wooden bridge over the calm river. The lights reflect on their faces, and the night's silence makes every touch feel eternal.

Elira (gripping Arbeni's hand tighter): Not as a touch, but as a thought that has seized her consciousness. A silent closeness that needs no body to feel real.

Elira (whispering, as if telling herself): "I feel you… not just in body, but as a presence that fills me. Every smile we never gave, every breath we stopped halfway… everything reality denied us, overwhelms me here."

Arbeni does not move closer immediately. He stays there, at the most dangerous distance—the distance where desire begins to think.

Arbeni: "Here there are no mistakes, because here there is no fear. Only awareness. Only us, as we never dared to be. Everything we didn't live, we feel."
They stop by the river as always. The water is calm, but not dead. Like a mind hiding turmoil beneath its surface. The light's reflection shimmers lightly, like a forbidden thought that will not leave.
Elira: "It's strange… this feeling. It touches me nowhere, yet I am full everywhere."
Arbeni looks at her—not as a man desiring her, but as a person who knows another human being deeply.

Arbeni: "This is the erotica that is never consumed. Feelings that grow because they never run dry. Our love here does not rush toward release—it deepens."
They walk slowly, hand in hand, but his fingers do not squeeze. It is a restrained touch, almost mental. Their breaths synchronize without effort.
Elira: "I miss what never happened… not as an act, but as a possibility. What my mind built night after night."
Arbeni stops. He does not see her immediately. He remains silent, then speaks quietly, with a voice that burns:
Arbeni: "Here there is no loss. Every desire left unfulfilled is still alive. We have not lost it—we have preserved our closeness, untouched. In this silence."
They are like two bodies making love, always uninterrupted.
Elira lifts her eyes to the sky. She feels the weight of her body lifting, as if she has become pure sensation.
Elira: "Our dream does not need a body to be real… it knows me better than any touch ever could."
Arbeni approaches just enough for their thoughts to mingle.
Arbeni: "Here we are free because we do not need to prove anything. Here life becomes eternal."
They stay close, very close, without touching more. What is happening is not physical—it is a connection that burns without burning. They pause for a moment, standing near each other. A touch of the hand, a deep gaze, and silent smiles are enough to say everything.

Elira: "Even though morning returns us to reality… here we are untouchable."

Arbeni: "Always, Elira. Here our love cannot be extinguished. No distance, no power, no time can change it."
On the last night, they walk hand in hand along the dream's streets, feeling the rhythm of their hearts, speaking without words, where every glance and touch says more than any dialogue.
Elira: "Here we found everything we lost outside… we found true love in this dreamland."
Arbeni: "This is our world… the only one untouched by reality. We will always be together."
They cross themselves and turn to the sky, hoping it will make this love real.
But great loves do not live on earth. They are always in the air, and in the eternal cosmos of human purity.
They are together only in the dream, there in the eternal dream.
Arbeni finds himself in a space resembling an endless corridor. The light is dim, absorbed by walls that were once white. The breath of the hospital still lingers—not as a place, but as memory. Invisible stains of pain, red shadows that did not disappear even when eyes were closed.

He stands still, gripped by that feeling that returns only when one faces what was never healed.
Arbeni (to himself): "Everything was filled with wounds. Not only the bodies—but even the walls remember. That man left… but what he left behind continues to live. The hospital was not just a place. It was proof that pain can

remain… because it continues the same, without justice."
In that moment, Elira's presence is felt before it is seen. She appears beside him, calm, as if the darkness opened only for her. The night's light softens her face in a way that never existed in memory.
Elira: "Arben… what we saw there hurt us. But here… I feel as if the wounds no longer belong to us."
He looks at her with a sense of liberation and weight at the same time.
Arbeni: "Here there are no walls holding pain. There are no shadows chasing us. There is only us… even though inside me, the memories still breathe."

They begin walking slowly along a quiet lane. The dream river reflects distant lights, creating a calm that needs no words. A gentle breeze accompanies them, like a breath that keeps them awake.

Elira takes his hand. Not tight—just enough to feel.
Elira: "Every step here carries more weight than all the days we spent apart. Here, time does not slip away from us."
Arbeni stops. Looks directly into her eyes, as if he wants to hold this moment forever.
Arbeni: "Everything we saw, every wound, every injustice… here loses its power. It does not disappear, but it no longer rules us. What remains is this—we are together."
They continue walking in silence, held by a dream that, for the first time, frees them from the red shadow.
They stop by a calm lake. Their hands touch silently,

speaking more than any words could.
Elira: "It's incredible… how a dream can feel more real than any reality."

Arbeni smiles faintly—a smile not born of ordinary joy, but of a calm hard-won. His eyes stay on Elira as if seeing her for the first time, without the burden of memories, without the fear of what could be lost.
Arbeni: "Here, every gaze, every touch is pure experience. No need for protection, no need for justification. The mistakes that followed us hold no power here. The pain exists somewhere far away, like an echo that cannot reach us."
He pauses as if listening to the silence.
Arbeni: "Only here do I understand how much reality has deceived us. It taught us to doubt, to fear, to keep distance. But here, distance does not exist. It's only us, free from time, from guilt, from everything that separated us."

His voice softens even more.
Arbeni: "And for the first time, I am not afraid of what comes next. Because whatever happens after, this moment is real. And that is enough." Arben… What we saw there hurt us. But here… I feel as if the wounds no longer belong to us." He looked at her, a mix of liberation and weight in his chest.

Arbeni: "Here, there are no walls holding pain. There are no shadows chasing us. It's just us… Even inside me, the memories still breathe."

They began walking slowly along a quiet lane. The water of the dream river reflected the distant lights, creating a calm that needed no words. A gentle breeze accompanied them, like a breath keeping them awake.
Elira took his hand. Not tightly—just enough to feel it.
Elira: "Every step here carries more weight than all the days we spent apart. Here, time doesn't slip away from us."
Arben stopped. He looked her straight in the eyes, as if wanting to hold that moment forever.
Arbeni: "Everything we saw, every wound, every injustice… here it loses its power. It doesn't disappear, but it no longer rules over us. What remains is this—us, together."
They continued walking in silence, carried by a dream that, for the first time, freed them from the red shadow.
They stopped by a still lake. The touch of their hands was quiet, yet spoke louder than any words.

Elira: "It's unbelievable… How can a dream feel more real than any reality?"
Arben smiled lightly. A smile that didn't come from ordinary joy, but from a peace hard-won. His eyes stayed on Elira as if seeing her for the first time, free from the burden of heavy memories, free from the fear of loss.
Arbeni: "Here, every look, every touch is pure experience. There's no need for protection, no need for justification. The mistakes that have haunted us hold no power here. The pain exists somewhere far away, like an echo that can't reach us."
He paused for a moment, as if listening to the silence.
"Only here do I realize how much reality has deceived us.

It taught us to doubt, to fear, to keep distance. But here, distance doesn't exist. It's just us, freed from time, from guilt, from everything that ever separated us."
His voice softened even more.
"And for the first time, I'm not afraid of what comes next. Because whatever happens after, this moment is real. And that is enough."
Inner Reflections
They stand by a small bridge over the dream river, the night's silence spreading a deep calm.
Elira: "And the hospital… every room, every—" "Every patient, every document… everything we saw there is part of our memories. But here, it cannot touch us."

Arben: "Yes. The memories are alive, the red shadows still linger in my mind… but here, we find peace. Every touch, every smile, every look… it fills us with strength and love."

They drew closer, their deep gaze becoming a silent conversation. A quiet smile, a gentle brush of fingers, a sense of absolute presence.

Elira: "Here, our love cannot be extinguished… not by time, not by pain, not by reality."

Arben: "Elira… in this place between dream and reality, we are free… untouchable."

The Final Intimate Moments – The Night of the Dream

They stood face to face. The dream's light dimmed slightly, giving space for their final words.

Elira (softly): "When we wake… does this mean we are parting?"

Arben looked at her for a long moment. No sadness in his eyes, only calm clarity.

Arben: "No. It only means we return each to our own place. Parting is when you forget. We do not forget."

Elira smiled faintly, holding back tears.

Elira: "Then why does it hurt so much?"

Arben: "Because the love that hurts isn't wrong. It's real. The small things never hurt."

She lowered her head for a moment.

Elira: "In reality, we didn't know how to live together."

Arben moved closer.

Arben: "Because reality requires strength we didn't have. But dreams only require courage to feel."

He touched her hand lightly.

Arben (softly): “Here, we are not apart. Here, we are as we’ve always been—without fear.”

Elira lifted her eyes.

Elira: “Then let’s promise nothing to the day.”

Arben: “No. Let’s leave everything to the dream.”

They embraced—not hurriedly, not to part again, but to know each other one last time in that form. Their bodies relaxed, their breaths synchronized, and the dream held them like a space that required no explanation.

In that embrace, there was no fear of waking. Only a truth unspoken, between two hearts beating as one:

Love is measured not by how long it lasts, but by how deeply it remains—even when we wake. There is no separation between two people who truly love each other.

What we call separation is only time. And time is not the enemy, but the test.
It is not people who divide, nor roads, nor circumstances.
It is God who sets the distance, and dreams that keep them together.

Because true love does not live only in the body, nor only in the days.
It lives beyond hours, beyond distances, beyond what we see.
It moves in silence, rests in memory, and is reborn in dreams.

And if one day two souls return to each other,
It is not chance, not fate, not a flaw in time.
It is proof that this love did not belong only to this world,
But to a wider universe, where separation does not exist,
And union needs no reason.

Because what is true love never divides—it only changes form until it finds its place again.

Elira cried continuously for her story and her fate. She wrote a poem of grief, published in many Western newspapers.
They parted alive, and we still live with this hatred,
Like clouds drifting toward the gate of a dark sky.
Now even seagulls no longer fly over the seas;
Only crows bring some new news.
Nights, like graves, lay heavy and cold,
Crushing the love we could not hold.
Beneath a sky both endless and wide,
Sorrow trailed us, nowhere to hide.

Even the seas let their last drops flee,
Deserts claimed the sands endlessly.

No seeds remained to take their root,
Only the silence, bitter and mute.
She sent a poem, wrapped tight in a letter,
Full of longing, full of love that won't fetter.

The Last Letter

To: Dr. Arben Kodra
Civil Hospital "Mother Teresa," Tirana
Washington, February 10, 1998

Dear Dr. Arben Kodra,
Unable to meet and be as we once were, I write to you from afar. The red shadows did not leave us. They took you from me, alienated you, and made you lose reason in a world where elites feed on humans and call it politics.
We did not part because of a lack of love, but because of the forces that rule and empty everything. Our loves live only as memories, as dreams that were never allowed to see the light of reality.

I write this letter not to reclaim what was lost, but to testify: Our love was real, even when the world turned humans into shadows, even when everything that mattered was destroyed, even when everything became permissible and nothing remained valuable.
In this vile, unfaithful, bloodless, cynical world, people go to work daily like programmed machines. They have no family, no origin, no roots. They do not care for one another.

They do not live—they function. They are only shadows wandering the earth, bodies without souls, presences without meaning.
They do not know what love is between two people, between two intellectuals, between two beings seeking one another—not for interest, but for meaning. They know only money and fame. They do not care if someone else dies. The poor, the impure, the oppressed under totalitarian regimes do not exist for them. Where death is the greatest punishment, it is delivered silently, without trial, without conscience.
People have turned away from the Creator. Or perhaps the Creator has turned away from them. It no longer matters. They continue to wander in the space of pain, where the strongest wins, where evil becomes shelter, where wrongdoing no longer hides but rules openly. Evil is not a deviation—it is the system. An experiment. The norm.

In this world, love exists only in dreams. Reality rejects it. Divorce is everywhere. Coldness is law. Disintegration is the model. Everywhere, orphaned children fall into the hands of the heartless, of those who call themselves human but act like wolves. Love is only a mirage, a light that dies before it is born. This is a world of heartless masons, where morality is an old commodity, where the soul is sold, and man devours man. A world where reality is not worth living, for truth has long been slain.
In the end, not even questions remained. Questions became unnecessary because the answer was emptiness. This world was not destroyed by wars, but by indifference. Man was not killed — he was erased. God was silent. Or perhaps

man stopped listening. Silence was the same.
Love was not betrayed — it was forgotten. Good and evil melted into a cold indifference, where everything is permitted and nothing has value. Death is not punishment — it is rest. Life is not a gift — it is delay.
And then a light appeared. Not to save. Not to judge. But to reveal the void. A light without warmth, without mercy, without promise. Shadows dissolved in it — not as souls, but as mistakes.
There was no hell. No heaven. No resurrection. Only a return to nothing. For the ultimate truth is this:
Meaning was not lost — it never existed. And so, the shadows keep walking.
Without voice. Without face. Without hope.
And perhaps this is the final proof that everything has ended. Or that it never began.
This letter is both fact and symbol: For us, for our love, and for all the loves lost in this world. In the end, the shadows continue walking, without voice, without face, without hope. Yet perhaps, just perhaps, these words will remain as a light in the emptiness where man became superfluous.

And even our love became a shadow — a soulless memory that cannot alter reality.

With respect and eternity,
Elira Dosti
Washington, D.C.

End. January 2026

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