

## Chapter 2 –

That morning began in an unusual silence. A thick fog had settled over the land, heavy and cold, wrapping the world in a pale gray veil. It crept through the streets and clung to the roofs, carrying with it a chill that made even the strongest shiver.

The cold had started long before dawn, and by the time the sky began to lighten, it had already driven sleep away from many.

Among them was him. He turned restlessly on his mat, unable to return to sleep. Though the hour was early, his eyes refused to close again.

Hunger twisted in his stomach, and the weight of the previous day pressed heavily on his thoughts.

Others were already rising too—people searching their pockets for a single coin, hoping to buy something small before the day fully began.

As darkness slowly gave way to light, he stepped outside and began to walk. He wandered without direction, moving back and forth along the same path, unsure of where he was going. His steps were slow and uncertain, his face filled with quiet worry. He did not notice that he had strayed far from where he began.

Then suddenly, a voice stopped him.

“Young man, where are you going?”

Startled, he froze.

Before him stood a woman, not old but no longer young either—perhaps twenty-five or slightly older. She looked unfamiliar, as though she belonged to this place while he did not. Her eyes studied him carefully.

“My mother sent me to buy something,” he replied hesitantly, “but... I forgot what it was. I’m trying to remember.”

The woman observed him closely. His eyes avoided hers, drifting toward the ground as if searching for comfort in the dust beneath his feet. She had seen this look before—the look of a child trying to hide fear behind bravery.

Without asking further questions, she gently took his hand.

“I have prepared something to eat,” she said kindly. “Would you like some?”

The offer was impossible to resist. It had been nearly fifteen hours since he had eaten anything. His stomach answered before his mouth could.

“Yes,” he said quietly.

She led him into her house and served him warm food. After ensuring he was settled, she stepped outside, leaving him to eat in peace.

About twenty minutes later, the door opened again.

This time, a short, heavysset, dark-skinned woman entered, followed by four others—including the kind woman who had helped him earlier.

“This is the boy I told you about,” the woman said.

Robert looked up, his mouth still full of bread, warmth spreading through his body at last.

“Good morning, young boy,” the larger woman said firmly. “What is your name?”

“Robert... Robert Fair,” he answered.

“Robert Fair?” she repeated. “Yes, madam.”

“My name is Trice,” she said. “I am one of the elders of this place.” She paused, studying him closely.

“This is my friend, Miss Lucy—also called Miss Zulu. She told me about a young boy who seems to be lost.”

She leaned forward slightly.

“So, Robert... where do you live?”

For a moment, he considered lying. He almost said he lived in the house beyond the cliff. But the image faded quickly—there was no house there, only the old carpentry workshop.

Realizing there was no point in lying, he lowered his head.

And then, slowly, he began to tell them the truth—how he had ended up there, alone, confused, and far from home.

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