

Chapter —FOUR.

What had she said the night before? Dofall pressed his fingers against his temples, trying to force his memory to cooperate.

The harder he tried to recall his conversation with her, the more it slipped away from him.

“Oh God... help me,” he muttered.

If he had known she would call, he would never have drunk so heavily with his friends. Now, the consequences stood before him like a wall he could not climb.

“Winnie... Winnie, you’re the only one who knows what we talked about,” he whispered to himself.

“But why did she block my contacts? Did I say something foolish?”

He sighed deeply, his chest tightening with anxiety. His thoughts collided violently inside his mind, each memory incomplete and distorted. His greatest enemy was not anyone outside—it was his own restless mind, dragging him through fragments of yesterday.

Then his thoughts drifted to Winnie again. What did she want from him? Hadn’t she already taken his son away? The thought pierced him sharply.

Somewhere out there lived his own blood—Robert—the boy he had not seen for months. The distance between them felt heavier than any physical separation.

A painful memory surfaced.

He remembered the day he had lost control. The day he swung his hand in anger after Rona confronted him about Robert’s behaviour. He could still see the tears rolling down the boy’s cheeks as Robert refused to return home with him. The humiliation and regret had haunted him ever since.

A failure to satisfy your own blood, is the greatest felony that hunted him.

Sleep had become impossible for him. Night after night, guilt clawed at his conscience, replaying memories he wished he could erase. For years, resentment and sorrow had quietly consumed him, though he never admitted it aloud.

For a moment, Dofall could not understand how his life had spiralled into such chaos. Slowly, he inhaled and forced himself to calm down. He lowered himself onto a wooden bench and stared into the distance.

One thought rose above the noise in his mind.
He had to change.

"I will never drink again," he whispered firmly. "I swear it... I will never drink again. Lord, I make this promise before you."

He lifted his eyes toward the sky, searching for forgiveness he was not sure he deserved.

Perhaps, one day, he would meet Robert again. Perhaps one day, he could ask his son to forgive him.

The cool morning wind swept across him, carrying a strange sense of peace. It brushed against his warm skin and calmed his racing thoughts. For the first time in years, he felt as if a new man was being born inside him.

Maybe it was not too late.

"Hello, Dofall."

The voice came from behind him. A hand rested gently on his left shoulder. The familiar tone sent a quiet tremor through his heart. Dofall turned slowly, disbelief widening his eyes.

"Hello, Dofall," the voice repeated.

He froze, staring at the figure before him, unsure whether his mind was deceiving him.

"Hello... Mr. Spake," Dofall finally managed to say, his throat dry. "Long time."

"Long time," Spake replied calmly. "Eight years," Spake added.

"Nine years," Dofall corrected quietly.

Spake smiled faintly. "Some things... you never forget."

Dofall inhaled sharply, steadying himself.

"The past should remain buried." Spake studied him carefully. "You're the only other person who knows. So if you're here... that means..."

Dofall hesitated. "That means you weren't looking for me?"

"No," Spake admitted. "I saw a familiar figure. For years, I buried my past and tried to begin a new life. But last month, I saw the news. The deceased family, one of mine is trying to reopen the case."

"That's impossible," Dofall said, his stomach tightening.

“They found something,” Spake continued. The world seemed to tilt beneath Dofall’s feet. The past was supposed to remain hidden—forgotten and sealed away forever.

“I’ve been taking care of the officer involved in the case,” Dofall admitted at last.

Spake exhaled slowly. “Then maybe it’s true. I heard he caught the culprits. The investigation had stirred public attention again now no.”

Dofall nodded, forcing a small, knowing smile. “That means we don’t have a problem... yet.”

“We still need to be careful,” Spake said, scanning the passing crowd cautiously. “We might stay in contact. And if the worst happens, God only knows.”

“I understand,” Dofall replied.

“I have a bus to catch,” Spake said, turning slightly.

“Where are you going?” Dofall asked.

Spake paused. “I’m sorry. I was so surprised to see you that I forgot to ask how you are. Things are going well for me. After a few years, I secured a teaching job. I’ve advanced in my professional career, and I’ve been posted to a new school. I have to report there by midday.”

They walked together through the busy streets, their conversation fading into short exchanges. Pedestrians passed them. A couple walked by laughing softly, their happiness sharply contrasting with the heavy secret Dofall and Spake carried.

Only after the strangers had passed, did they speak again.

The day itself seemed to hold its breath.

A secret they once believed would die with them had resurfaced after all these years, clawing its way back into the light, however they confident enough for it.

Eventually, they reached the bus station.

They embraced briefly. Then Spake stepped away and moved toward the departing buses, his posture careful and deliberate. His head remained lowered, shoulders slightly hunched, each step cautious—as if he were used to walking with hidden burdens.

The crowd slowly swallowed him.

Dofall stood frozen, watching until Spake disappeared around a corner. For a moment, he considered calling out, but the words refused to leave his throat.

Soon, Spake was gone.

Only an empty pavement remained, as if he had never been there at all.

Dofall exhaled slowly. The air felt heavier now, filled with unfinished memories and unspoken fears.

Spake's presence lingered in his mind. There had always been something steady about him—like a tree that had survived countless storms without breaking. He carried quiet strength, the kind that did not demand attention but commanded respect. Spake's hands, hardened by years of work, had helped countless people. He had mended injuries, supported the fallen, and offered strength where it was needed most. He never rushed anyone away. Kindness lived in his eyes, though they carried the weight of many untold stories—of people who depended on him, some who moved forward, and others who never survived their struggles.

Dofall remained standing there, wondering if their past was truly buried... or only waiting to rise again.