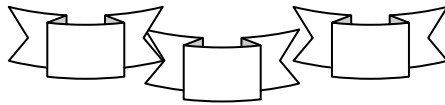


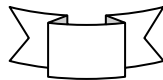
A DAY OUT WITH THE FIXER - Adiva's Diary

VICTOR OMENAI

A DAY OUT WITH THE FIXER



ADIVA'S DIARY



A Day Out With the Fixer: Adiva's diary

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DEDICATION



To my son, Tehillah, my unborn daughters Adiva and Chaniya, and to every child from 0 to 99 years old. Live long enough with the "right energy and education" to paint your generation beautiful with the pure colors of a pure heart.

PART 1

...SOMETIMES YOU LAUGH...

...Most Times You Try...

MEET ME

My name is Adiva - Adiva Jamin, and I'm eleven years old. My friends call me 'Adi'. And No, You guessed wrong. I'm not Arab. I'm American - Jewish American and I don't like my name anymore!

Since when? Since when the two most important people in my life - my parents - responsible for that name suddenly decided I was no longer their responsibility. All of this happened six weeks ago.

The thing is I discovered my parents saw me as somehow the problem of their life, and this I found out after people from the Child Welfare Agency whisked me from our house to this place while my mum and dad simply stood aside watching as if to say, "shoo, shoo! Good riddance!" Then it clicked.

I'll tell you what this place is. It's where children like me are taken to be safe from what the government calls "life threatening situations" living with guardians or parents whom the government suspects or accuses of neglect, abuse, or both. They call this place a shelter, and that's where this whole story began...

THE BEGINNING

So, what is this story? It's my adventure story of how I got trapped in dreamland after I somehow stumbled on something crazily out of this world - some things about myself - that blew my mind and yes, did really get me in some really serious trouble!

Well I hope you can keep a secret, can you? Cos this thing - nobody really knows about this side of me. Okay, well, not like nobody per se, cos Beckley, my best friend, does, and yea, my parents do also, alongside Beckley's. So what is this out-of-this-world crazy stuff about me that landed me in dreamland and began the beginning of trouble for me and everyone around me?

Well, it all started when officials from the Child Welfare Agency came to our house uninvited to see me. I mean, they came to see me like I had some business deal to strike with them, cool me Adiva! It got even better when my Dad introduced them to me as people from Mr President sent to check up on me. I'd never seen these faces before in my whole life, but taking two swipes across the two officials standing before me in the living room was all I needed to tell me they weren't kidding. Gosh! I felt like reaching for my phone. *Beckley's got to hear this. For crying out loud, whoever gets the President to check up on them!* I felt like JoJo Siwa coming up stage with her body guards behind as she yelled out to her highly ecstatic kid fans, *"what's up siwanatorz!"* and the whole arena exploding with excited screams.

Well, it's been three weeks since that visit. The feeling now, after the people from the shelter whisked me off here? Nothing like what I dreamed of. This time, I didn't feel I was JoJo Siwa any longer. I felt torn away from my family, betrayed by Mr President and my parents - the family I was being torn away from. Funny! I was surprised and shocked at dad and mum for letting go off me just like that - like I was no longer their responsibility anymore. It got worse for me when I discovered I would be staying indefinitely here at the shelter until the government had finalized plans on my permanent home.

Perma-what! Now that's it! I was right; mum and dad had gotten tired of me, the baby they made together eleven years ago, and had decided to send me to this hell hole of a place. This was the evidence I needed to conclude my suspicions. I was the reason for their many fights, period! Why? 'Cos every time they fought, mum would get herself drunk, crying bitterly, and when I tried to go close to her, she'd just freak out, pushing me away like I was trouble. In my Dad's case, he'd calmly but firmly order me to my room, then simply step out of the house and never return until the next day. I always wondered if he had some other house aside ours where he went to sleep after their fights.

By now it was clear I was the problem – their problem, 'cos if it wasn't so, then the government wouldn't be thinking of finding me another home - another family with whom I could live instead of simply returning me to my parents. I was now sure my parents had found something wrong with me and being unable to fix it, what best to do than send me away to some place where they must have believed would have the solution.

EVERYTHING CHANGES

With each passing day here at the shelter, I wondered what was wrong with me that could make my parents connive with the government to find me another home. What could it be? Was it that bad that I needed to be out of the picture?

"I think something is wrong with me," I blurted out to Beckley as we talked over the phone some days after I got settled down at the shelter.

"You think so!" asked Beckley, obviously puzzled just as I guess you guys are right now.

"Not just that. I think they're not my parents," I replied, confident in the analysis I had drawn and was about to unfold to Beckley, "cos if not, they would have known how to fix me up just like any product's maker would."

"True, except that would mean you feel you're a product," she punched back precisely the way I had anticipated.

And without mincing words I replied, "Yes!"

She went silent. I had gotten the reaction I wanted and was about to let the handle fly with the remaining part of my findings, so I continued, "I never saw or heard of anyone who made something they didn't know how to fix when it got bad."

"So!" Beckley spuriously replied. "Ah come on Beckley! Don't you get it? If they truly made me - truly gave birth to me - they'd know how to fix me up and not instead throw me out here like trash," I retorted, puzzled at her dumbness.

She went silent again for a long while this time. I waited. No response. Thirteen seconds after and counting, still no response. *The hell where are you Beckley?*

"What's up!" No reply. "What's up Beckley!" Still no reply at the other end. "Where you at, girlfriend?"

"Hey! I think you nearing your expiry date, Adi!" she hit back sharply.

Now it was my turn to go silent. Yes, Beckley indeed just thought of me as a product like I wanted her to. But this was way beyond my expectation. If I was a product of someone's making, which of course should be my true parents, then like all products with dates of production - their birthdays of course - and expiration, then she wasn't wrong to conclude I'd expired or was about expiring.

Gosh, something is really wrong with me! Could it be I'm about to - no! Have I reached my expiry date!? What does it mean for a human to expire?

And as I pondered over this, the realities of what it means for a human to expire slowly began to dawn on me. Everything and everyone around me began slowing down - people's voices around and outside; the children running all around; the birds across the sky; the clock hand on the wall; my heartbeat. *Gosh, my heart!* Suddenly, the AIR FROZE!

A STRANGE CALL

I don't know how long it was, but as soon as the air froze, everything went BLACK for me. It was the sudden buzzing of my phone that jolted me back to the moment - a Whatsapp call with '*the fixer*' as the caller 'ID'. Now that was weird! Nobody on my contact list bore the name, '*the fixer*'.

I couldn't understand what was happening, so I dashed off to my whatsapp chat. Nobody like that! I headed for the whatsapp call history. Nobody like that too. Just then the call came through again. The same caller ID again!

It was alarming to see a Caller ID I never saved splash across my phone display on whatsapp! After a long ring, the caller hung up. My heart was already thumping hard. It was then I realized I was alone in the room. It was quiet outside too - eerily quiet for a place I'd come to know as home for a while now - no voices around or outside, not even that of the smaller kids bouncing up and down the hallway.

I peeped through the window out to the lawns; not even the trace of any of our caregivers; no one in the playground, along the lawns or the sidewalks. Curious to know what was happening, I decided to step out, not after I'd grabbed my phone anyways. My fears grew worse as I went from one room to the other without finding anybody. Everywhere I turned, EMPTY SILENCE! By this time, I had slid out of the backdoor through the kitchen onto the backyard. No one in sight still. Around the compound and toward the streets, I started to freak out. Just then my phone buzzed with a whatsapp message. It was Beckley.

We'd been talking over the phone before everything went black. I could see her several *hey's* and *wus up's* now on Whatsapp. I failed to answer. And now, she had just sent another message, this time a voice message asking to know why I hadn't picked her calls also.

Now that was just as weird to me as '*the fixer's*' Caller ID issue. How on earth could I have been so lost in thought that I didn't hear my phone

buzz the many times Beckley messaged me? And how then was I able to hear the same phone buzz with 'the fixer's call? By now I had gotten to the fence, staring in shock at an empty street. It was completely empty - no voices from the buildings around. No cars or pedestrians. It was all dry - as dry as the desert.

Another message from Beckley popped up again; she was still waiting for my response. So, away I began chatting, explaining to her what happened - how I had truly realized she was right to suggest I had an expiry date. I reeled out to her how that got me both scared and curious to know what expiring would mean and what date I was supposed to expire –

Me

I haven't changed my mind.

I'm convinced mum and dad don't have a clue about what's wrong with me - even how to fix me

Beckley

OK!

Me

I think they must have discussed with the government to find who can.

Beckley

So that's it!

Me

What?

Beckley

They know something we don't know about why you're there

Me

Yeah!!

Beckley

And since they didn't make any effort to stop the government from taking you away to that shelter, then there's still someone we haven't met.

Me

??

She was going all detective and I seemed to like the feeling that we were playing cop busting gangsters on the prowl in our system.

Me

It's the President, isn't it?

Beckley

??

Me

*The President. He's the one we're yet to meet!
I mean me.*

Beckley

*Common' Adi! I mean the ones who know your true making.
That's the one who can fix you up.*

And typical Beckley, she just shot off with no brakes putting a call to me and speeding on.

"You haven't noticed any of those people there paying you much attention than all the other kids, right? No one talking about taking you to some other people, right?" she bluntly asked.

Grudgingly I responded, "Well - um -not really!" And then I lit up annoyed, "Hey! I thought I told you I heard them talk about taking me to a permanent home if somehow they're unable to fix things up with Dad and Mum."

"Yeah, you said so," replied Beckley unmoved.

"I don't pretty much remember seeing or noticing anything extra," I continued.

"Hmmn! Then we've got no time," said Beckley straight on.

"For what?" I asked, sounding lost already.

"To get you fixed, of course!" she declared.

"But um...how in the world..." "Definitely not in this shelter now," I cut in.

Just then, a Whatsapp message popped up: *Hi Adiva!*

NOT PLEASED TO MEET YOU!

"The fixer!" Beckley asked puzzled. "Who's this 'the fixer?'"

"No idea. This is the second time today but something tells me this may be the someone you said I'm supposed to meet," I answered, my mind racing with all sort of ideas.

"You're not kidding me, are you?" she said, amused.

It was bad that someone somewhere was playing a trick on my mind, pretending to be some mysterious fixer I need to fix me - like I really need one now - but worse still, my best friend thinks it's funny. I decided not to answer her. But Beckley, like her usual self, didn't notice my silence. And if she did, it didn't matter to her.

"I think if you're not joking, then you know what to do," she concluded.

"I know what to do?" I asked puzzled, staring at 'the fixer's message on my phone, wondering if it was the right thing to do to reply the message, or just call 911. Right there, another message from '*the fixer*' popped up: *don't you want to be able to fix you up?*

Woo-hoo! I almost screamed.

The fixer

You do!

Me

Can you? I mean fix me up?

The fixer

No, I can't

Me

You can't?!

I was thinking *Who is this dude or whatever*

The fixer

Actually, I'm here to show you what you never knew you can do.

Me

What I never knew I can do!?

The fixer

Yep!

That was some sort of a puzzle for my small brain to figure out. I needed to know who this person was in the first place.

Me

Who are you? The fixer?

The fixer

Is that what you call me?

Me

That's what I have here!

The fixer

Okay, let's call me that then.

Now that got me pissed me off.

Me

?? Call you that! You ain't the fixer'?

The fixer

Depending on what you're looking for.

Depending on what I'm looking for! What the...no more cussin Adi! But what does this fellow mean by "depending on what you're looking for?"

But then I began to reason to myself, wondering what in the world I was looking for. And as I turned around from the fence, a kid bumped into me

excitedly flying a kite. Lifting my eyes, I was stunned to see kids running and screaming and playing. Everywhere I turned, there were no shelter officials in sight; just kids let loose. Over at the trampoline, I spotted Terrence, my best friend at the shelter.

Terrence was one kid you couldn't forget in a hurry. He knew how to make everyone laugh. I also thought we had something in common cos he, like me, felt betrayed by his mum too. And just like that we stuck - BFFL - "Best Friends For Life" - sharing the same pains.

Terrence's mum was caught for doing dope and sent to jail, leaving him to no father or family. Poor Boy - now he's stuck out here for life like many other kids. What makes him really cool? I don't know. Maybe it's the way he talks and walks - so cool like he's got no problem in the whole world. I tried to copy him but couldn't figure out how he always pulled such stunt.

With just two days left for him to be sent to a permanent home - a foster home - strange people for the records, Terrence wasn't looking any bit the kid who would soon be torn away once again from his loved ones like he was torn away from his mum few months ago. And now, he was doing it again, waving to me with such excitement that could infect like vampire bite, Aaargh!

"Adi! No adults!" Terrence excitedly me over, his voice bouncing as he went up and down the trampoline half full with kids screaming like no tomorrow.

Yes, I know it sucks to hear us kids wish there were no adults in our lives. But this time, we were on top of the world. No adults anywhere near or far, and that got me grinning with excitement all the way to Terrence.

"Where did they go?" I asked him as I waited, calculating when it would be right to join the bounce.

"Who cares!" screamed Terrence as he bounced on.

Well, it was clear nobody did. And why anyways! Weren't these the same adults who tore all of us away from our loved ones without the slightest respect for our feelings or our opinions? Suddenly, I thought what if someone has a serious fall or something worse as we're playing? But the fun right before me was too great to let go. Hurriedly, I shrugged off the thought and grinned to Terrence.

"Nobody!" I screamed, and away we bounced with no care in the world.

We bounced from the trampoline, to the bouncy castle; up and down the slides, and the seesaw. Then from the seesaw, I spotted a kid about jumping off her swing but suddenly miscalculating. As she was being flung off the swing, in horror, I thought *I should reach out for her*. In a flash, shockingly, I felt me zooming off to her from where I was and back to my spot as she was forcefully thrown back onto the swing in the same flash much to her shock too. In that instant, out of the shock I lost control of the see-saw handle bar and was jerked off the fast rocking see-saw into...

BOOM! BOOM! IT'S A BOOMERANG!!

Yea, this is where it gets really spooky, you know! Not the kind of flesh eating-bug-crawling-up-your-underwears-ripping-off flesh or zombie-going-on-rampage-kind-a-spooky-thing. Aaarrgh! No, no, no! Not that kind of spooky, but...err... This is where the real trouble starts.

So, were was I? Yeah! I lost control of the see-saw handle bar and got jerked off the see-saw, was flung unto total BLACKNESS and QUIET. I don't know how long it was, but after a while the distant noise of kids playing nearby began streaming to my ears. The closer the noise got, the more the BLACKNESS began to fizzle out until I suddenly woke up and realized I was lying on a bed. Looking round, I saw that I was actually back on my bed in the dormitory. This looked strange.

Out the window, I could see the kids still playing outside. Yeah, Terrence too; not the slightest hint of the adults anywhere nearby just as I had left them. In my head I tried fixing the puzzle, but it wasn't making sense at all. *For crying loud sake, how in the world did I get here from the seesaw? How in the world did the - heyyy, the fixer!* I had just remembered the fixer. Suddenly my phone buzzed. *How did it go without the adults?* It was the fixer.

Okay, so this isn't a dream.

The fixer

No, my dear! You just made everybody's day.

I could hear Terrence's excited screams outside.

The fixer

Glad you made his day too, right?

At that, the pictures began rushing back to me - turning around and bumping into the boy with the kite, up and down the trampoline with Terrence, the bouncy castle, down and up the slides and the see-saw; spotting the kid about getting off the swing and losing balance; in horror,

reaching out to her the moment I imagined it, wishing I could just save her and *Pow*, the moment I blanked out!

Slowly I began playing it all in my head all over again trying to understand what in the world had happened between those split seconds when I wished I could just save her and when, in a flash, she was instantly in midair flung back to the swing - how in a mix of horror and blood rush I suddenly felt me zooming off from where I was to her and back in a flash. And just as I wished, she was safe. *You're right, kid!* That was the fixer again on Whatsapp. And I'm right there thinking, *I'm right? About what?*

The fixer

Just as you wished!

Just as I wished? *Whoever wishes for things and just like that!?*

The fixer

You, kid!

Me? *How come I was - wait a minute!* Right there dawned it on me that something weird was really happening to me. Not only had I thought that girl out of danger through my thought, I was right now not actually chatting with 'the fixer' on my phone! For crying out loud I'd been thinking to him all the while and hadn't realized so. *Him!?* Did I just say him? *Fancy me saying him when I don't even have a clue what this fixer person looks like.*

Buzz, buzz!

The fixer

Yea, kid. You've been thinking to me!

And yes, I can hear your thoughts.

I stood rooted to the spot, stunned and afraid to think of anything right

there as I stared wide-eyed in wonder at the phone in my hand. 'The fixer's' words kept ringing in my ears.

You just made everybody's day!

Glad you made his day too, right?

Just as you wished!

Yea, kid!

You kid!

You've been thinking to me!

And yes, I can hear your thoughts.

Like a DJ turn table at work, the words began spinning and whirling about my head: *You Just Made...Glad You Made...Just as You wished...You've been thinking to me...You...You...You...You...Glad you made his day, right? AND YES, I CAN HEAR YOUR THOUGHTS!*

Like a rushing flood, the whole puzzle began to fit in my head. I felt like screaming out to the whole world - like joining the birds in the sky, soaring to heights beyond this world. Just then my phone buzzed with Beckley's call.

"Guess what?" she sounded with excitement in her voice.

"What?" I asked curious even as I was feeling awash with so much energy inside of me like I wanted to explode.

"Watz up, siwanatorz!" giggled Beckley in a mimicry I could never mistake for anything in the world, "its today, girlfriend!" she screamed cutting in on my thoughts.

"Wooooooh!" I shrieked in excitement realizing she was talking about the JoJo Siwa concert billed to hold at our city hotel park. We'd been waiting for this since the advert started running on TV in the last one month or so

now, although, unfortunately, we couldn't convince either of our parents to get us tickets to the show. Beckley too was excited. I could hear her giggles and screams over the phone. Just then, 'the fixer's' voice rang again in my head. *Yea, kid!* Just as you wished... *And pow!* I screamed all the more louder, right there suddenly knowing what to do.

Infecting Beckley with the sudden rush of energy, I could hear her excitedly burst into more frantic screams. Frantically loud and loud we both got until, bursting into a piercing sound, our ears began tingling, forcing us to cover them down with our hands in a mix of wonder, fear and excitement. Slowly looking up, we came face to face with an incredible sea of heads - all kids - all the way up to what was an electrifying stage. Turning to look around was, all the way behind us and around us, seas of heads - all kids too screaming and jumping and shouting. I couldn't believe my eyes. This – this was the largest gathering of kids I'd ever seen or been in my whole life. And we were right in it! Nobody cared to notice us. Nobody even noticed us.

Suddenly, the speakers came alive, "Watz up siwanatorz!"

My eyes lit in surprise. Realizing who that was, we both turned feverishly to each other. "Waaatz up siwanatorz!" the voice came again blazing through the length and breadth of the whole place as JoJo Siwa ran in onto the stage, her dancers running in with her in the midst of electrifying lights, dazzling fireworks and the blast of her instrumentals.

The whole place went agog with screams as we both hugged each other jumping, crazy with excitement and screaming, "No adults, girlfriend!"

And as if she was right there by our side, hearing us loud and clear, she shouted back, "Boom, Boom! No adults, siwanatorz! Cos I'mma come back like a boomerang!"

Boom! The beat went crazy. Amazed, I almost erupted with excitement.
And then POW deep down, I thought I erupted!

PART 2

...EVERYDAY COMES WITH ITS
OWN SONG...

...learn it well before you play to its
tune...

SO, WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

DARK. SILENCE. A faint sound from afar, drawing close..and close...and close...and...I think... I...I can hear it! It's heavy! A ... a THUMP! like the sound of...hmmn! sometin beating hard...It's...it's...its my heart...my heart, beating! THUMP-THUMP-THUMP! Sssh-sssh! There's something else! Faint...like...a...a sob! A sob?! Yea, its a sob! A sob! Someone is crying! VERY CLOSE!

My eyes fluttered open. It was my MUMMY! Huh! My mum! And backing me at my bedside, there she was crying. And I'm thinking, *What in the world is mum doing here at the shelter - by my bedside for crying loud sake!? Is she here to pick me up? Or...am...am I back home? That must be it! I'm home!*

Well, I thought since I was now powerful enough in my mind to do whatever I strongly desired, it could mean this - my mum here - was another strong desire I had made happen just like the fun I had with Terrence and the other kids here.

If you was me - making things happen here and there with just the wave of your every thought- would you have thought any better? You don't think so, right! Uh-huh! That was all I could ever think too. But my mum crying by my side - I also wondered if this was also part of my strongest desires too - to see her feel the same pain they put me through - she and Dad, every time they fought and tossed me aside like trash. *So, am I now making her pay for all that pain!? Then what about Dad!?*

Just then the door flung open. "Daddy!" I cooed, surprisingly joyous to see him.

Startled, mum turned to me. "hey! " she sniffled, looking me all over with her eyes and hands as if I had just come out of an accident. And as my eyes followed her and everywhere, I realized this wasn't home or the shelter. It was a hospital. And as Dad walked up to us, I looked at my parents, lost and couldn't help but wonder what again in the world had I

... what again have I done to myself with this power of my thought thing?
Yea, laugh all you want.

Yea, laugh all you want. You know what? At this point I wasn't liking this new found power of mine any longer and *just wait till I lay my hands on this 'the fixer' of a person who started all this.* But then I thought, *how in the world do you catch someone you dont know what they look like and can't trace them to any place?*

Asssh! Adi you've been a fool. How could you believe all that "you-can-do and go-anywhere-you-want to with-your mind" crap. Who does that, Adi? Who does that except in the movies! It's high time you shrugged off this dumb talk and think straight! So Adi, why are you lying in a hospital bed?

"The doctor said you had suffocated in that crowd at the concert, " dad chipped in, noticing how I kept observing my surroundings with a puzzled look.

Suffo-what! At the con... Jeez! Beckley! Alarmed, my eyes roved about the room. Were in the world are you girlfriend? Come out from wherever you are hiding right now, geek! I couldnt stand dad's prying eyes. Mum too!

"She went into a shock after they brought you in here," mum said as if reading my mind, "but she's with a doctor. Here."

So Beckley's here? I wondered. *What's her condition right now?* It was all confusing and distressing. *Fallen*, she said. *How does one fall into a shock?* I wanted to see Beckley. I needed to see her.

"She's fine," dad patted my hand reassuringly. "We've gone to see her."

"Yeah, " nodded mum.

Two hours later, Beckley was declared okay. About fifteen minutes afterward she was right with me. All this while, mum and dad somehow

kept mute about the whole incident. No scolding. No questions. Just caring for me all the way. *That's scary, you know!*

Dad and mum were now gisting with Mr and Mrs Todd - Beckley's parents - over at the other end of the room. Beckley sat gripping my hands, we both, refusing to glance in their way. We were both sure those adults over at the corner of the room were dying to squeeze the truth out of us , just waiting for our conditions to get better, or better still, for us to get out of the hospital before any further interrogation.

Now it wasn't the interrogation we both feared. Yes, we went to the JoJo Siwanatorz concert. And yes, we had fun - though short lived - but no doubt that fun no one could take away from us. So, we had better braced ourselves for anything. That wasn't the problem. The darn crazy thing about this was telling people how we got to the concert.

Aaaargh Adi! The mess you've put yourself in. I looked at Beckley - *the mess you've put your best friend too.*

"I'm sorry, " I whispered to Beckley.

"Wha-" she looked at me puzzled.

"I said I'm sorry...I'm...for all of...!

"Yeah, Yeah. I get you," she hushed me in my tracks, stealing another quick glance over her shoulder to them and back to me. "Did you...did you tell them anything?" she whispered.

"Anything!?! Did you?" I replied with just as much as the same, if not more measure of curiosity as she had about our fate. I was the bigger of the culprit, you know.

"Did you?" I urged her on 'cos I believed she must have spilled out something since she was the only one conscious when we got to the hospital.

"No. I...don't know how to put it, Adi. It's crazy, you know," she admitted

looking confused and scared, pretty unlike the Beckley I'd always known - the one who always had something to say about everything.

Aside the fact she's what you may call a nerd, Beckley was one girl I knew with guts; a rare combination, if I must say, unlike most of the nerds I've seen in school. But the fact that right now she looked to me like jelly got me pretty scared. I thought *if Beckley can become scared, then I should simply fizzle off the scene. Yeah, Adi. Maybe you should just fizzle off this scene.*

And then I waited. Nothing happened. *Fizzle outta here, girl. To where exactly?* I thought. *Not home now.* I needed my privacy. *Obviously not the shelter either. To Disneyland? Well...* I'd been there before a number of times. I needed someplace different, new, fresh. So, I kept thinking and thinking where in the world to vanish off to. No idea. *Okay Adi. Simply fizzle outta here first. Then figure out where you are later.*

I waited. Nothing. Waited more, and more, and more! Nothing! *Come on, fizzle out, Adi!* Still nothing. And then I panicked. The more I waited, the scarier it became admitting to my growing suspicions. The truth was - in all of this - I had somehow begun to enjoy this power of mine - whisking myself away from whatever and wherever I didn't want just by firing up my imagination. But right now I wasn't finding it amusing. From the way I was struggling to think me out of here, it seemed I had somehow in the midst of all of this lost my powers.

It felt scary to think what that meant. Back to status quo. Gosh! I can't afford to go back to that life. I needed to be in charge of my life. But now with no powers, how do we prove we went to that show the way we did?

"I can't - we - we can't confess to my powers. It doesn't make any sense," I stuttered.

"You don't have to!" said Beckley, a mischievous grin playing across her face.

"I don't?!"

"If you don't have the power now, then we didn't go nowhere by ourselves," she grinned all the more.

"Oh!" I almost jumped out of my bed with excitement. But then I realized we had created another problem with this innovation. If this *power-of-my-imagination-thing* isn't the big deal that took us to the show and landed us here in this hospital, what then should it be?

How could I have stolen past all those adults at the shelter, the cameras and those security guards at the gate, without being noticed? And yes Beckley - my good friend; if I did not whisk us away with my mind, then how did she steal past her parents and their guests in the lobby? The only reasonable option would have been out the backdoor through the kitchen.

"Drusilla was there, baking," Beckley cut in.

Drusilla was her elder sister. Well, that was our last card, for Beckley, destroyed. The only reasonable explanation left for such flawless adventure was this *my power of imagination thing*. But what would it make of us? *Freaks! Yeah, freaks!*

I could almost hear every kid in the neighbourhood, at school and at the shelter screaming it over our heads for many days - maybe years - before something new takes over the news update. A painful truth. But I had to come to terms with it to face the bridge we were now bound to cross.

OOPS! IT'S A SLIPPERY BRIDGE!

Dad used to say "silence is golden". And gold, you know... gold is everybody's darling. Okay maybe not everybody's actually. Adults, Okay? But us kids? Naaah!

You see, us, kids, don't get what the big deal is about gold that freaks adults. Yeah, gold has this sparkle and look that makes it look royal, they say. Adults, I mean. You know what I think? Well, me thinks royal is whatever I feel is royal to me, isn't it? If somehow I can't find anything useful about something, then it ain't gold, cos gold's got to be of real value. *I know you adults out there wanna like wave me off with a simple, "she's a kid, you know!"* And that - exactly is my point. I'm a kid and kids don't - can't play with gold - so what its use anyways for us?!

Mum keeps hers away from me because I'm a kid. For all I care, I have never been able to strut about the house with her jewelries or her gold brooch just for the fun of it. Why? You got it: because I'm a kid!? So, I made a law. If you can't use something or play with them, then, they got no worldwide value. And if anything's got no value, then it can't be golden for all. Period!

Well, I never understood how silence could be golden until we had no choice but to use it in the fix we'd found ourselves. It was now already three 'O' clock in the afternoon, six hours since I had passed out at the JoJo Siwa concert, and was now fully awake. All this while, Beckley had not uttered a word about our little secret since she was supposed to be in shock then. And now, she was just coming out of the shock. So, without planning to employ silence, Beckley's shocked state had given us the gold we needed. I loved it. She loved it. So I reasoned what if we just continue with this whole 'being shocked thing' as long as we can? Let's see how far we can go with this.

"What?!" blurted Beckley, her face looking like, *'hey Adi, so lame. You should have known better!*

"You have some other better plan!" I squared up my chin at her.

She shook her head and shrugged. "Okay. But for how long?" she asked.

"We'll cross that bridge!" I replied, hoping we never did any soon.

You know how it always is with things you have no power over, like the hands of the clock on the eve - the night - of school resumption after a long summer break or awesomely fun-filled weekend. At such times, I always hoped those hour, minute and second hands would just stop ticking, so morning wouldn't have to show up at all.

Do you know what I always ended up doing then when it got too much for me to bear - I mean when those hands refuse to take a break? Simply take out the clock cells? *If it can't tick, then the morning won't come*, I thought. Well, that was way back when I was as little as seven years old. I guess I soon discovered those ticking hands of the clock had no business controlling the day. It was always saddening to wake up to find out that morning had showed up.

My only comfort then was the coming weekend. Fridays were the holy days for us at school. We adored it like the Catholics did the Virgin Mary mother of Jesus. It was the one day we always wished showed up quickly as we went to bed on Thursday night, because when it's Friday morning, its TGIF!

My point? Well, just like I always eventually had to face school the next day no matter whether the clock hand on my wall worked or not, so it turned out with this wish of ours not to cross that bridge of silence to the next thing.

So, here's how we got onto that dreadful bridge. You see, while I was unconscious after passing out at the concert, before Beckley's shock - her well planned shock - the hospital had contacted my parents with her help

since she was the only one around who knew me at the park. Understandably, they didn't call the shelter, so, that explains how I found my parents at the hospital and not officials of the shelter. Of course they were shocked over the phone to hear that their daughter was lying in a hospital unconscious when she ought to be safe at the shelter. The most confusing aspect of it all for them however was *how I did it - slipping out of that shelter with no one - not even one adult noticing.*

"That's sheer negligence!" dad blurted out, "the same thing those people accused us of. We didn't let her loose on the streets! But look what they did!"

"Huh huh!" the others chimed.

Obviously they all saw it the same way - the shelter's fault. So, actually, while I was working my head off, me and Beckley, we had overlooked the most obvious aspect staring us in the face. The fact that we are kids! And all kids are their parents' responsibilities or whoever are their guardians. So, if somehow we had run along on our own without any adult able to control us, then - your guess is as good as mine - whose fault it is.

You see, by keeping quiet, we stayed as kids, but unknowingly, had stepped onto the bridge we'd been wishing not to. And as we would soon realize, this one was a very slippery slide all the way to the other end.

SURPRISINGLY SURPRISING, WE ARE SURPRISED!

THE first thing that never changes about surprises is that you are always curious to know what they hold when you're informed of a surprise in waiting for you. And surprisingly surprising, even when you're aware of what it exactly is, you still always get surprised when the gift finally arrives your doorstep. So, with this bridge when we got to it.

You see, by simply playing the innocent children we ought to be - through our silence anyways - it simply took everyone's attention off us to the shelter. And so, the whole talk was now all about *the shelter*.

The shelter should have done this. The shelter should have done that. They shouldn't have done this, and that. They should have known better. The shelter, the shelter, the shelter! So, by the time Dad set the tone for that conclusion and everyone concurred, to me and Beckley, it was like we'd been handed the gift of a surprise in waiting.

The next thing was the surprise that always comes with the surprise gift when especially its box is popped open. And this surprise sure did spring its in-box surprise at us. Jeez, did we slip dangerously off this one! So, open Sesame, here's the string of surprises that surprisingly knocked us off our happy horse: Dad and mum decided to sue the shelter for gross negligence! That's what Mr Todd - Beckley's Dad - their lawyer advised them to do. The idea was so they could claim damages from the Child Welfare Agency.

DAMAGES! That was SURPRISE NUMBER ONE in the box. The last time I checked my dictionary, I understood the word 'damage' to mean 'to destroy', 'to make something not intact again', 'to harm'. That got my head spinning. *Was Dad planning to destroy the shelter? Were they planning to harm everyone in there - the kids and adults alike?* Harming everyone at the shelter made no sense to me. Yes, my parents were most times at each other's throats, but they'd never harmed me or tried to harm anybody else. So why now? The problem was the word *damages*.

From where I sat observing how bitter everyone was, I had no choice but to hold onto the meaning of that word and stay on the implication: the kids are in danger! I hadn't made a lot of friends at the shelter, but it was unimaginable to think of all their pretty smiles and laughs fading away into cries as the planned destruction from my parents tear apart the shelter and everyone in it. I knew I would never forgive myself for recklessly swinging my thoughts here and there without regard for the downsides. But, *How was I to know there was going to be downsides to exercising my mind powers? 'The fixer' never told me so!* Just right there and then, it suddenly occurred to me that I hadn't seen or heard from 'the fixer' since I regained consciousness.

"Can we just leave out this 'the fixer' stuff?" Beckley cut me short. "We don't even know if he's a he, a she - if they're real. Don't even know if we're ..."

"...if we're going nuts!" I cut in, really irritated that she would suggest us crazy. The adults turned in our way. Instantly we gave them a sheepish grin and turned back to each other.

"Sorry," we both muttered staring long, then hard at ourselves.

All too seriously, I said, "You ... you don't think we're going nuts, right!"

Obviously caught in between, she kept muttering um - em - well - um. And just then over the topside of my bedside drawer, my phone buzzed. "'The fixer!'" we both exclaimed without checking. And truly it was 'the fixer'. SURPRISE NUMBER TWO.

VICTOR OMENAI

PART 3

...IF THE FOUNDATION IS
DESTROYED

WHAT CAN THE RIGHTEOUS DO?

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

Did I mention earlier in my introduction that I'm Jewish - Jewish American for the records? Yeah, I think I did. You know the most interesting thing about it - being Jewish? Its being Jewish! You don't get it? Okay, you see most times when I get to introduce myself to a new friend in school or neighbourhood, they raise eyebrows asking me all sort of questions like You - Jewish? You're from Israel? The Bible Israel!? The Jesus, Moses, Samson, David and Goliath Israel?!

It's always about the bible story characters. And whenever I'm not in a good mood, I'm like *"hey! Can I get a break!? I don't know these guys! OK?!"* And when it's the other way round with my mood, I go, *"yeah, sure! It's the same Israel. Adi from the same Israel. Yeah, yeah, the Jesus Israel, the David and Goliath Israel, the Moses and Pharaoh power show - Israel kinda thing! Beat that - if you can!"*

Well, that's about the only interesting thing I enjoy being from Israel. Oh! Yes, there's one more, though it's a blend of fun and a bore, sometimes. It's the fact that my parents are not just Jews, but Christian Jews. So, on one hand, we had Sunday School - the bore, and on the other hand, we had the *Kibbutz* - the fun part of being Jew.

What's a kibbutz? Let me explain. Imagine a town full of nobody else but your many aunts, uncles, grand and great grand-parents, grand and great grand aunts and uncles, cousins and grand cousins, and so many others. *Phew!* Awesome list there - a whole village of one pretty great number of family members. Incredible, right!?Yeah!

You don't want to imagine the fun - cousins here and there to mingle and play with, coupled with dotting uncles and aunts spoiling us with one goodie after another, and always checking up on mum and dad to see how they were doing. The fun always was ballistic. Did I say was? Well, I don't know whatever happened to mum and dad but somehow they just decided we were moving outta the *kibbutz*. I asked why, but they just mumbled something like *Adi, sometimes adults like to have their privacy.*

I couldn't understand what that meant. I thought we were all happy living as one big family. That's when I started to really desire I was in charge of my own life so I could be where I wanted to be when I wanted to. Yeah, that's when I think that desire began growing in me. And as we left the kibbutz, mum and dad announced we'd be attending church - for the first time in our lives I must say. That was the second shock. In one word, we were becoming Christians.

Being Christians meant Sunday school with Mr Rudolph, our children's Sunday school teacher. Sunday school always commenced with one particular bible memory verse: *if the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*" It was Mr Rudolph's way of drumming down our heads the need for us to appreciate never rushing to anything except we got its basics.

So, by the time I asked Beckley if we were going nuts, I was already thinking of 'the fixer'. I had already started wishing I waited patiently to ask how this 'power of my mind' thing worked. Maybe Beckley was thinking the same too, I couldn't tell, but by the way we just clicked with the drama of that phone buzz, I didn't need any magic spell to tell me she'd been thinking of him too. Fancy me saying 'him' when we can't even tell if 'the fixer' is a he or she!

Okay, my point actually. We had realized that we weren't going nuts because we couldn't deny our recent experience. Yeah, we could stay on the safe side of being kids - play silence for a while, long enough to allow our adults fight the shelter instead of us. But, even if we got away with our offences forever because we're just *kids*, it was impossible to deny we had both experienced certain unimaginable things through nothing else but this power of my mind. Why and how it seemed like I'd lost it, and couldn't use it at the moment to whisk us out of all this, I knew I'd find out later. But that didn't change the fact that something weird was happening to me, with me, and through me. It was at that time my phone

buzzed with 'the fixer's call' - just exactly the moment we had both come to terms with the truth. Mr. Rudolph was right all along. What other way to fix this than back to the beginning!

LET THE FIXING BEGIN

About three weeks ago, if I was asked to choose the one thing in the world I would love to change, you know what that would be? The control adults have over us kids! Yeah, I said it! *Like why do they have to always be the ones telling us what to do, wear, eat, where to go and when to go there? Who put them so in charge of us kids? Who?*

You wanna know who I think it is? Them! They put themselves in charge over us kids because we're small, little bones and no power to make money on our own to buy for ourselves all the nice things we want when we want them. It's them always telling us *how much of food we can have and not have - how much of candies and cookies, how much of chocolates, peanut butter and jelly sandwich, even ice-creams! Rationing iced-creams for crying out loud! Ice-creams!*

It always beats my imagination when they do that. *Like, why do they do it? What do they mean whenever they say honey we're running low on credit so you can't have that now?* It just don't make sense. Why have us go into a mall where all the nicest things are, and still stop us having all the nicest things there? Who does that!?! Adults, I say. And it's because they create the money. Wait till I find a perfect way to create for us kids our own money with this imagination power of my mind.

Honestly I really wanna rule my world. I've always imagined the fun it would be to just be in charge of your own world. And this is exactly what I got when 'the fixer' showed up. Real fun as I always dreamed. But now looking at everything, I knew my dream life was heading for the rocks, dragging me and my loved ones along with it - Beckley, her parents, Terrence and all the kids at the shelter - *especially them - the kids.*

All because of me and my dreams, I was now helplessly watching my parents and Beckley's about to become murderers in a matter of time. Yes, helplessly, 'cuz now it was getting increasingly clear to me that I had

somehow lost my powers in this rollercoaster ride. And without my powers, I was back to where I always loathed - *not being in charge*. But not being in charge ain't the *in* thing driving me nuts in this whole mess, but the fact that I was drowning in a mess caused by no other person than me.

It was me who let that first ridiculous idea sink in, concluding that mum and dad didn't love me - that they were fed up with something about me. Then that ridiculous idea took me through another more ridiculous one - the thought that I should need fixing up so I could be accepted again - be loved again. Really, all I wanted was someone who understood my makeup and knew how to make it work the way it should. Maybe I'd then be the perfect version of me - the me nobody would again push aside the way mum and dad always did after fighting. The me nobody would have to just manage putting up with like I suspect the shelter people are doing with all of us kids there.

You know it's quite disheartening to learn that the people you thought loved you were simply just putting up with you so not to make you feel hurt. The problem is you always end up hurt eventually when you learn the truth. So, what's the point anyways? That's one reason I roll with Beckley. We're not coping with each other. We believe we're both worth being friends - chums for life.

"Jeez - thanks!" said Beckley, blushing because I had just admitted to 'the fixer' that she was the one true best friend I had. And I meant it for real.

Beckley had been with me from the very moment I got whisked away from my parents to the shelter - *well literally not bodily* - from calls to chats and SMS, keeping tabs on one another till the moment we both figured out I needed fixing, and even after. And now this was how I decided to pay her!

I had messed up everything. Instead of getting fixed, it now seemed like I'd gotten pretty worse than when I first arrived at the shelter. In this my crazy ride, I had suspended to God-knows-where all the adults at the

shelter just so I could have the world I always dreamed of - a world without those adults. And it was while at it, I almost killed that kid who nearly slipped off her swing. I almost killed myself too, twice for crying loud sake!

I now realized nobody was safe around me anymore. And not just other people alone, but even me - I wasn't safe from me anymore. Life before the shelter now seemed to call me back - *back to the world of adults!*

So, just wish yourself home! That was 'the fixer.'

Me

I can't

The fixer

Or, you won't!

And then I thought *could that be the reason I'm not able to get me outta here?*

The fixer

Is that what you think?

Me

It's not what I think. I wanna be here, not stuck out there!

The fixer

Then why do you wish for life before the shelter? That's home - your home!

I went silent. That was right and I couldn't deny it. But going home, no way!

The fixer

I see.

Me

What?

The fixer

What about Beckley?

Beckley looked at me with a questioning gaze. The adults were seriously discussing and deliberating this thing. That sent a message to me: *maybe it's high time we both seriously talked about this bridge we'd crossed.*

"I'm sorry," I said to Beckley. "I've messed up real good."

She uttered nothing, just staring at me deep in thought as I fought hard the tears welling up my eyes. If you knew Beckley before now, you would know that whenever she's like this, expect a bomb coming right at you the moment she decides to open her mouth. And just then, she decided to talk.

"Adi!" she spoke up with a face that told me *take cover Adi - here it comes*, "Adi, why don't you just wish everyone back to where we all should be - where we wanna be?"

"Huh!"

"Yep!"

I paused to reflect over it and thought I should redirect the question. "Where would you want to be right now?"

"It's not just me, Adi," she replied, "It looks like we're trapped in your dream - your fun!"

Dammit I knew I'd messed up. But to hear it from my best friend - it was like a dagger through my heart.

"Ahem!" someone coughed nearby - too near for comfort!

SURPRISE NUMBER THREE- the adults had come close and were now right around us. Obviously, they had heard enough. With a sidelong glance, I could see Dad's stern face, my chat screen the centre of his attention.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BRIDGE

We had now crossed, or need I say, slid across this slippery bridge to the other side. And on this other side was a group of not so nice looking group of faces staring at us in wonder. Not too long, it was a group of questioning stares.

"We're sorry. I'm sorry Mum - Dad, " said Beckley taking the fall for us.

Unable to look at them, we turned our faces to any other spot but to their questioning gazes. *O my heavens, where do I begin? I can't wish myself out of this. It's my world. I'm responsible for it! Where do I begin?* I thought.

Buzz, Buzz! *The beginning, Adi!*

That buzz from 'the fixer' got them turning their attention to me.

"Maybe you should start with this," Mr. Todd pointed to my phone.

Chiming in support all the way with nods and mutters from the other adults, poor me in the middle of it all, I had no choice than get onto the hot seat by force. *So here goes nothing.*

.....
The silence afterwards was icing cold. Such times, I wished I was 'the fixer' hearing everyone's mind as I wanted. If I was in their shoes, how would I have felt hearing such news? I'd be astonished, shocked, afraid! Yeah, afraid! Who wouldn't!? I mean, if I could transport - no! *What's that word again? It's er..em...tel...tele...yeeah! Teleport!* If I could teleport all those adults at the shelter to 'God knows where', just so I could have my world all to myself, then who wouldn't be scared what else I was capable of doing! The Todd's had suffered their share - Beckley - whisked away from under their nose just by my wild thought. Anything could have happened to her. I could have had a headache right at that moment and mistakenly teleported her mid space to anywhere. A ditch, or worse right in front of a train - *Aaargh! Hold it, Adi!*

Even to me, the truth was now clear. I had become a threat to everyone, and even to myself. I was afraid what I might carelessly do to me. *I want this fixed but I don't wanna lose my world. It's where I'm me.*

Buzz, buzz! My phone. And just like the first time, this buzz again got everyone immediately turning their attention to my phone.

Unconsciously, I smiled to myself as I read the message.

The fixer

So where do you want to be?

I took a good look at mum and dad. They looked just perfect in this world where I was in charge. Here, dad wasn't beating mum, and she wasn't throwing objects at him like missiles in warfronts. Mum felt safe. Dad himself looked loving. *Kudos Adi! Except I feel like a fairytale witch who'd cast a spell on this unsuspecting couple, taking away their memories of the real world they belonged to. Nah! That's not fair. Not nice at all!*

By now the doctor had come in and was doing his rounds of check. To me he didn't exist. I was totally not the least bit conscious of anything he was doing. Beckley was on my mind now. I couldn't help but be concerned for her health even when we both knew she had feigned being in shock.

Talking about Beckley was an open door to talking about her dad and mum. And talking about them, wondering what they were thinking, steered me back to the shelter kids whose lives were in danger if mum and dad followed Mr. Todd's advice. He was the brain box behind this threat. And I wished I could *imagine him out of my world* to avert this great impending disaster. But *I couldn't!* I didn't know how to again. *Don't even think about it, Adi. Lord knows what this might turn out to be - possibly another trouble added to what we have on ground already!*

It was surprising to me that I was fast losing the desire to whisk all of this away. Maybe it was because somewhere deep down I knew doing that

would mean all of us going back to the other world where control was in the hands of the adults. I couldn't afford that to happen. But unfortunately, I could see I was losing the fight against total adult control. Mr Todd was fully in control over this situation, painting to my parents the beautiful colour of his well-thought-out *damages* plan. And unfortunately, mum and dad had bought into this painting!

As much as I longed for home, I knew home would never be the 'and-we-lived-happily-ever-after-kind-a home' I wanted, because in that home was the real problem that landed me at the shelter in the first place. And that meant back to square one - me returning to the Child Welfare to stay at the shelter for forever or as long as it would take for the Child welfare to consider my family safe again for me.

From the look of things, I could see the answer to that question from Beckley, Adi, *why don't you just wish everyone back to where they should be?* That was the answer. It was right in the question. Everybody with me had their place that I had somehow displaced them from just so I could live my dreams. They'd be glad to go back to their place - their world, their dream.

By now if you're really following through all that's been happening, you must have known *that going back to not being in charge is the real deal for me. But is it like I have a choice now?* So, I decided it was time to face my fears. Take everybody back home and ... *Woo-hoo! woow-woow-wooo! Hold it there, guys!* Guess what!?

I had just gotten a big bright idea.

MY BIG BRIGHT IDEA

"Can I get some time with...um," I pointed to my phone. It's a bit odd for a kid to demand for utmost privacy and instantly get it without causing unpleasant shifts here and there with the adults. Plus if you knew my parents, you'd know they're strict on things that I'm sure they bother about.

Well, talking about control, if there's one good thing I eventually got from this situation, it was this particular point when everyone had now come to accept 'the fixer' as a part of my life. So, when this idea came into my head and I found it was necessary to talk to 'the fixer' about it, for the very first time in my life as a kid, I was surprised to get a YES from all the adults in my life immediately I requested to be alone.

For the records, the doctor had certified me fit to go home. The question now was *where is home?* For Beckley and her parents, home was sure. For Terrence and many of the other kids at the shelter, maybe no home in sight yet, but home to them at the moment was no other place aside the shelter. The only problem? If there was going to be home in the future for them, how would that future family find anyone of the kids intact without the help of the shelter, given the way things were already going. My frenzy mind power ride had really set those kids and everyone in there up for destruction - *whatever that is in the plan of these uptight looking adults. I knew I really had to act fast and right away even if it meant going back to ...*

Buzz, buzz! 'the fixer' continuing our conversation.

The fixer

Ur sure?

Me

Yea

The fixer

U wanna do this?

Me

It's not like I've got a choice

I'd lose real friends forever if I keep keeping everyone tied down here

The fixer

You're smart, you know!

Me

You think so?!

The fixer

No. I fixed you up so. Now ur thinking, not just plain dreaming.

That took me by surprise. Now I'm thinking, not just dreaming! I thought everyone thinks. What does that mean?

The fixer

So, what do you say!

How about asking them back in?

Me

Aiit

.....
"No, no, no. We can't let them off the hook just like that!" Mr. Todd was not going to hear me out any further, and my dad too.

Dad wasn't going to forgive the shelter for taking me his daughter away, first of all. And now to make things worse, the same people who labeled him unfit to take care of his daughter had themselves committed the same offence. To him and Beckley's dad, it didn't matter whether I had slipped out or not, the fact was they were not fit to be a welfare agency for us or any other children at all.

"But they're the only ones the government gave the right to be in charge of kids like me," I replied, putting up a fight for my cause - my big idea.

"Not again, dear," dad grinned to me, "They've lost that right."

"But it was my fault, not theirs," I pleaded.

"She's right, honey," mum cut in, turning to Mrs. Todd for support, "or what do you think, Dora?"

"huh! um...!" stuttered Mrs. Todd obviously caught unawares, "Yeah!" she quickly said in one breath, finally coming around.

"Common! Dora, we..." Mr. Todd tries to wave off his wife.

"No, Ron! Come to think of it," she cuts in. "Who gets to take away our rights for letting Beckley slip away under our watch? All she's asking is a chance to make this all right again."

"That's true, Daddy," chimed Beckley, "Adi isn't even letting me take any blame in this. She's taken me and you guys outta the whole picture. I think we should just help her fix this the way she's asked."

I could see the guys squirming uncomfortably in their seats. The whole place itself was suddenly too silent for my liking as my insides did multiple somersaults. I wasn't sure what to expect. I thought having the power to think anything into being would make things fun for me. But this! This was no fun at all! Nobody was getting whisked away. And I wasn't feeling in control of this whole deal. *How can the fixer call this thinking!?* *Hmmph!*

Not being in control of what to expect from this was torture. I kept fiddling with my fingers hoping for the best, or - actually I had no alternative plan to this idea. I was gonna get them to accept it or keep fighting on till they accepted it anyways. Okay, I know by now you must

have gotten a hint of what this idea of mine should be. So, let's see if you're really in on this.

Well I'll say no you're not in on this idea of mine if you thought I'd simply do as usual: use my mind to whisk me home with my parents, somehow whisk those missing adults back to the shelter and finally wipe everyone's memory clean of everything so far, so the shelter people do not remember I ever was in that shelter. This would also mean wiping off mum and dad's name out of the Child Welfare Agency's file as parents ever accused of child neglect and abuse. *What a way to go, except that is impossible since I seem to have lost my powers!* So, a big NO, if you thought this was my idea.

Well, since I'd somehow lost the use of my mind powers, the only option left would be to think my way out of this mess. So, yes! You did have a hint if you thought the idea was for me to return to the shelter, as that would simply prove I was sorry for what I'd done. The right place then for mum and dad would be back at home without me. I'll then have to wait and hope they got their acts right enough to meet the requirements of the Child Welfare Agency. Then, we could live together again as one family. Except there's a problem with that.

If you knew my parents, you'll agree with me that I could be in for a long wait. I could as well begin to look forward to getting another family like what was about to happen to Terrence. So, if you thought it exactly along this path, then you're on point. And for the Todd's, aside maybe having to scold Beckley for accompanying me on such rollercoaster ride, all they'll have to do is take their daughter back home and simply fizzle outta the scene. I was the major factor in this whole mess, and that, no one could argue.

Would this solve the issue of the adults missing at the shelter? I couldn't guarantee. But one thing was sure: the shelter was no doubt the safest place for a kid like me - safe away from gangsters who could do anything to kids like me. So, I figured out, maybe if I returned to live in the shelter until things are set right with my parents, maybe just maybe my powers

might return and I could help bring back those missing caregiver adults at the shelter.

OFF WE ROLL!

Have you ever had this bright light - no something like millions of lights - strongly flashing all through your head cos you just knew somehow in your head you were right about something? This was the kinda feeling I had pondering the idea again and again. And as it got brighter and brighter in my head, I felt like I could taste its success.

So, off we rolled - me, mum and dad actually - to personally drop me off at the shelter. The hospital had already discharged me fifteen minutes before. The time now was 7:06 PM as we pulled up in front of the shelter. If we were to stay true to the plans on ground, we knew there was no need to waste another hour dawdling around the hospital. For dad and mum, going home for even a breather was no option at all.

It turned out that as we walked in, the place was completely in order! Not a kid was outside; of course it was already past seven. And the adults? Yeah, the adults; right before our eyes were the shelter caregivers busy about the place. I almost erupted with excitement.

"See! I told you they was gonna show up!" "Yeah honey," mum stroked my hair. She was smiling, and Dad too.

A car was driving out. I almost melted when I recognized who it was approaching.

"Adiva!" That was Mrs Robinson, director of the shelter, surprised to see me as she approached us in her car. "You're not kidding me. Where have you..." She pulled over next to us.

"Where..were in the name of God have you been?" said Mrs. Robinson rushing over to us, not even concerned to shut her car door or kill the engine either.

Realizing she hadn't killed her engine, she hastily rushed to the car and did so, quickly turning to us unable to contain her excitement and surprise together.

"I mean we searched everywhere," she beamed on to mum and dad as she gave me a mother-hen look from head to toe, "we've been searching for her for over three hours and had to alert the police.

Even Mum and dad were seriously amazed. As for me? Yeah I was too, more really shocked. Yes, I knew deep down somehow this idea was my new real deal. But what I wasn't prepared for was this much real of the deal. Fancy me all dead worried about all of them adults here, wondering where in the whole universe I had carelessly teleported them, and what they were going through there. Fancy me going through all of what I went through to get here, only to find that I was just being worried for nothing. *Everyone's been dead worried about me instead!*

"I'm sorry. Mrs Robinson, "she tapped her chest introducing herself to mum and dad, "Sally, if you like; the director here."

"Adiva's parents," chorused mum and dad, making their own introductions. Mrs. Robinson went pale. I thought she looked like she was going to sink into the ground. Noticing the uncomfortable situation she was in, dad took over.

"We actually brought her back. We knew she must have slipped out when..."

"Yeah," she cut in, "I mean no. Um...I'm sorry," stuttered Mrs Robinson, all flushed with embarrassment.

"Guess she was missing her family," chuckled mum, staying the conversation on the light side, "But we knew for now that...em"

"For now this is the right place. The place for her while we both," he gestures to mum and himself, "You know..."

"O yes, yes," grinned Mrs Robinson rather clumsily.

Plan two sealed! My insides did multiple somersaults, excited as I shared a quick knowing look with mum and dad. We couldn't afford to lose our cool. It was necessary for *plan three* of our Big Idea. Getting me to the shelter was *plan one*. Staying on the calm side was *plan two*. And now that we had successfully carried out the first two plans, it was time to launch *plan three*.

THIS IS IT!

"I'm sorry Mrs. Robinson," I cooed, indeed sorry for everything.

"Awww!" she stooped to look at me. I wanted to avoid her gaze but she drew me close, patting my hair. "It's okay. It's okay!"

I nodded hoping she meant it all, and then turned to my parents, "I'm really sorry dad. Mum!"

They smiled as dad stretched his arms to me. "Come here cheerio," he said.

I sank into his embrace as he drew me close and planted a kiss on my forehead, drawing tears instantly from my eyes.

"Sssh!" he gently hushed me as I suddenly felt mum's embrace from behind.

"I love you mum. I love you dad," I sniffled, trying hard to fight back the tears welling up more and more.

"I love you cheerio," they chimed in my ears.

"We'll be back for you," dad gently assured me as the tears flowed freely.

I clutched onto my parents, wishing this - the shelter was not part of my world.

"I promise. We'll be back, huh!" reassured dad.

I felt mum shift. I looked up to see her look at dad with so much admiration I thought I can't believe my eyes!

"Promise?" I asked like my life now depended on that one word; on my parents.

Truth is, it does. They're my parents for crying out loud! No pretending I needed them. For once in my life, I didn't want to be in charge of my life. *Just take me home dad. Take me home mum.*

"We promise," mum smiled to me stroking my hair, "now run along cheerio," she said, planting a kiss on my forehead.

I nodded smiling and sniffing as Mrs. Robinson held out her hand to me. I took it, my gaze refusing to leave mum and dad.

"Thanks so much for...um...all of this," said dad to her.

"Yeah. We're really grateful," added mum and then she called out to me, "Adi, Say hi to Terrence for"

My eyes lit. *Why! What!?* This is it!

Okay, okay! I know you're wondering what this is all about. Alright, I'll let you in on the gist - the gist of *plan three*: Y'all remember Terrence, my only best friend at the shelter. Y'all remember I told you the shelter was already making arrangements for him to get a permanent family since his mum was serving time in jail. And since he's been at the shelter, he's not had her visit him unlike the other kids who have had their parents or guardians visit them at least twice.

The reason is this: the prisons won't release a prisoner anywhere outside jail. And the shelter? *Kids are not supposed to be within the four walls of a prison, especially when they are under the protection of the shelter.* So, all we wanted was for him to be given the grace to see his mum - maybe for the last time in his life - before leaving for another family.

So, when mum requested I extend her regards to Terrence, that was the spark for a new topic - new topic of discussion amongst these three adults already getting along with themselves. You get it?

Now there's something about conversations that never ceases to amaze me - how one topic with your friends can just keep growing branches here and there till you guys can't track where the whole talk all began. *You*

know what I'm saying don't you? Yeah, that's exactly how this same conversation took off. And before you knew it, me hand in hand with Mrs. Robinson and my parents, we walked into the director's office, chatting about this and that - the shelter's challenge everyday with the kids, that and this, until they eventually came around to hit Terrence and the issue with not been able to visit his mum. I sighed with relief. *Finally!*

"What if there's a way - a better way to get him see his mum?" Mum suggested in the middle of all the 'this and that' and 'that and this.'

"You ... you do!?" an amazed Mrs. Robinson asked.

"Huh huh!" replied dad and mum.

And so, they went on and on about the whole plan, how Terrence would get to see his mum, but not within the four walls of the prison. All we needed was Mrs. Robinson's office - the shelter - reaching out to the prison officials for us in this quest to put a long lasting smile on the boy's face.

"Well, what can I say! It's a tough thing you've asked for. But - er, " she looked adorably at me, "it's the best I can do. I could have lost my job over your daughter's case if... I mean you guys are the bomb."

She sighed, smiled and extended a hand to dad, and mum too. "For Terrence?"

"For Terrence," they chimed back, taking turns to shake hands.

"Let's do this!" said dad.

.....
Four days later at the shelter, while all of us were preparing to go to bed, and Terrence was getting his things packed up for the next morning - his last night with all of us at the shelter - the door to the boy's dormitory swung open with Mrs. Robinson and somebody else standing in the

doorway. It was Terrence's mum, dressed in a beautiful gown, without handcuffs and no policemen or prison officials by her side.

Terrence's screams pierced the whole shelter almost bringing the roof down. He never believed he would ever see his mum again, least even have her stand right before him again right in the shelter. All thanks to Mrs. Robinson who agreed to talk with the prisons and ask for a special request to have Terrence's mum visit her son for the last time without handcuffs in the presence of her son, not in the prison environment and with no uniformed prison guard officers.

His hyper excited *mummy, mummy, mummy* screams was all I needed to know I had finally succeeded in my long desired quest to be in charge of my world. And just there I thought I saw God wink. And o yes, I gave him back my best wink ever!

THE END

SO WHAT ABOUT THE FIXER!?

I wish I could tell you straightway here about this fixer of a person - *who it is, and did we still get to chat on after everything?* But you see, mum and dad took away my phone from me to discipline me for causing so much trouble with it. And O how they kept visiting and visiting, checking up on me like it was the kibbutz! *Talk about habits- they don't die easily, especially when it's from the kibbutz?*

Anyways, all through their visits they kept hammering this to me: *we'll come finally for you very soon.* So, I wasn't just expecting my phone but also expecting to see my parents again, not here but away from this place forever.

Sure, they returned about a month later, but by that time, I no longer needed a phone to reach 'the fixer'. Somehow on the night of Terrence's beautiful meeting with his mum, I stumbled upon *a whole new out of this world way* to reach 'the fixer' aside my phone.

Wait till I find time to tell you this other side to my mind powers I never knew about - *my story of a million lights!* But right now, I've got to run. Cheers!

VICTOR OMENAI