

Written by Ady Lam

“Something happened , right?” His dreadful voice broke the fragility, the shocked-stillness of it all.

“Abba, Cousin Wonda. Cousin Wonda, Abba.” I mumbled, introducing them. They nodded to each other, each only briefly understanding what was occurring.

I muttered under my breath. “It’s, it’s happened.”

Cousin Wonda immediately started to apologise to us, to me, to Abba, to Ato Alemu. I could hear their voices faintly, but I didn’t bother to tune in. I had caught sight of a boy at the railings, his arms flailing. It was Kebede.

Kebede. I didn’t have the heart to go up to him, to tell him the bad news. He noticed me looking at him, and started to call out even more. No, I told myself, silently. I wasn’t going to break the news again. It was too much. Too much. I wouldn’t be able to handle it.

Also, what if he judged me? The type of being he was, he probably wouldn’t, but still! What if he thought in the back of his mind that I was the fault of Grandfather’s death?

But, wouldn’t it be mean to him? My conflicting thoughts racing in my head, I soon thought of something else, another excuse.

After Grandfather’s death, Ato Alemu, Abba, and I were walking along the hallway. The nurses and doctors we saw kept on saying : “I’m sorry.” , but, it sounded a bit fake. I couldn’t deal with another fake apology. My grandfather’s death was real. How could anyone be faking their sincerity?! I just didn’t want to get hurt again.

Soon, some guards went over to Kebede.

“Boy, whatcha doing here, shouting like a hooligan?” in his backstreet accent.

Another cackled, and said : “Can’t ya see , he is one!”

I could see Kebede looking over at me for the last time, his eyes shining with tears, and as I looked back, I could see, if I looked close enough, he shook his head, and silently said to himself: “Why?”

That day, I lost not one, but two people who played a significant role in my life. Grandfather, and Kebede. One I couldn’t have helped losing, one whose loss I could have prevented. These days, when actual friends are rare, I know in my heart, that Kebede was a genuine friend. I wish, more than ever, that I had changed my mind in time, and instead, embraced my friend.