GARDEN of AYDEN

BY SUKAIYNA GOKAL



BEARING

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SCINTILLA PROJECT

Foreword

Grief does not arrive all at once, nor does it announce itself clearly. It accumulates. It settles quietly into the spaces left behind by love, by connection, and by the futures we once imagined. This story is a testament to what it means to keep living, loving, and giving in the presence of that grief.

At its center is the sudden loss of a sister, taken far too soon as the victim of an intoxicated driver—an abrupt, senseless, and preventable tragedy that reshaped everything that followed. Soon after came the loss of a hero, a figure whose life extended far beyond personal achievement. He opened doors for others, endured prejudice with dignity, and lived a life defined by service.

That hero later gave his life while delivering aid to those in need, embodying a belief that would quietly shape Jairdan's understanding of purpose: that the highest calling is to help others.

The losses did not stop there. They deepened and multiplied: a first love ended by distance, friendships that faded with time, the death of a mother, a marriage undone by mental illness, and—most painfully—the loss of children through parental alienation—a grief without ceremony, without language, and without clear resolution for more than twenty years. And, finally, the loss of his father, a powerful figure in Jairdan's life, and whose hand he held as he took his final breath.

For a long time, this pain was carried quietly. Like so many who are simply trying to endure, Jairdan sought escape—ways to keep moving forward while holding grief at arm's length. From the outside, life appeared intact. Inside, much remained unresolved, waiting.

Change did not arrive as a single turning point, but as a slow opening: new love, meaningful work, and the guidance of others who expanded Jairdan's sense of what was possible. That awakening also prepared him to stand beside his wife through her own profound losses, including the deaths of her parents and a year marked by cancer.

Along the way, teachers, colleagues, and friends modeled gratitude, compassion, and intentional leadership. Through those relationships, Jairdan came to understand his calling—not by filling the hole in his own heart, but by helping to patch the holes in the hearts of others.

It came late, but in its own time and in the exact way Jairdan needed it.

This is not only a story about loss. It is a story about transformation—about choosing to respond to grief by reaching outward, helping others discover what lives within them and find the courage to share their gifts with the world. Loss is not erased here, but reshaped into empathy, purpose, and connection.

This story will resonate with anyone who has known grief in its many forms, especially the kind that goes unseen, unresolved, or unnamed. It offers companionship rather than answers, reflection rather than instruction, and a quiet reminder that even after decades of loss, it is still possible to live generously—and to help others do the same.

Epilogue

I no longer wait for the moment when everything will be fine.

I am learning that loss does not resolve itself. It settles in. It becomes part of the way I carry my life—sometimes heavy, sometimes almost invisible, but always present. What changes is not the weight, but how I bear it.

For many years, I believed healing meant replacing what was taken. I believed wholeness required that. I am now learning something different: that some losses are not meant to be filled, only carried with care.

Grief did not disappear when I ran from it, or even when I stopped running from it. It changed, however, when I turned toward others. When I listen. When I show up. When I allow what has broken me to soften me instead of hardening me.

I am learning how small acts matter. How encouragement changes direction. How belief, offered at the right moment, steadies someone who is about to give up on themselves. Purpose does not arrive all at once. It reveals itself slowly—through service, gratitude, and the willingness to stand beside another person in their uncertainty.

I am not mending my own heart by trying to make it whole again. I am learning to live with its missing pieces. And in doing so, I am discovering something unexpected—that helping to patch the quiet wounds in others gives meaning to my own.

This is not a story about overcoming loss.

It is a story about carrying it.

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