

Unveiling self love by Ruhaina Akushieka Atikasi

Chapter 1(introduction)

The shadows of insecurity and doubt have cast a prolonged and lasting presence in the dark space of my mind. These emotions chains have held me captive and limiting my every movement and engulfing me in a cloud of self doubt. It is a silent battle I fight everyday. One that threatens to consume the very essence of who I am.

I've struggled with poor self esteem and a terrible lack of confidence all my life. A hidden struggle that made me feel overshadowed by the beauty of my friends. While I found it difficult to see myself in the same light,they were able to get compliments and praise with ease. As I watched them enjoy the glow of praise, envy was my companion, always lurking in the shadows. Then, like an unexpected ray of sunshine on a gloomy day, James came into my life. He has a way of making me feel lovely.Which was something I never before felt and it felt like rain on a dry land.

However he left me just as quickly as he had come, in a vulnerable state of confusion. The frail image of beauty he spun about me was destroyed by his absence. I allowed myself to think for a split second that I too could be considered as beautiful. Little did I know that this encounter would serve as a spark for my in-depth review of my worth rather than a solution to my low self esteem issues. The jealousy I held in came crashing back,stronger than ever. he had given me what I thought was glimpse of a better life, only to steal it away and leave me pining for something I didn't really have.

Chapter 2(early experience)

I've had self esteem problems which started from my formative years long before I met this boy. My self image was permanently shaped by the experience I had to navigate through while growing up.

Growing up I wasn't really the quiet one because I had no idea my looks mattered much. But I soon reached an age where my physical appearance played a big part on how I felt about myself. You see, my vision was far from perfect and a constant reminder of my visual impairment was the thick glasses that sat on my nose.

The world was blurry and unpredictable and I felt vulnerable and odd because of it. My classmates always pointed it out, heightening my insecurities. They appeared to exaggerate my clumsiness , leaving me feeling alienated in a setting where everyone could see properly.

I was overweight growing up too, and the extra weight became an amour against the world's criticism. The taunting I received from my class mates hurt like a thousand needles and left my mind with invisible scars. They repeatedly reminded me of my perceived incompetence with their harsh remarks which was often accompanied with careless laughter.

Even though they are affectionate in their own ways, my parents made weight related remarks at

home. They said it out of concern for my health but their comments further crushed my self esteem. My notion that there was something fundamental wrong with my and I needed to be fixed grew stronger as a result of their effort to control my nutrition and promote exercise.

I was almost always on a diet because my mum had her own anxiety and worries. She feared i would become overweight so she worked tirelessly to limit my food consumption, it made my highly conscious of my body at a young age. Everything I took a second helping from the dinner table ,I fought with guilt,as if overindulging in food was a sin.

My saving grace was when I lost about 40kg to a serious sickness when I was 15. My health was a concern but the quick transformation brought about a weird kind of insecurity. My biggest insecurity suddenly moved from my weight to my face.

My once round cheeks began to droop exposing a face i wasn't comfortable with, I felt as though I had been given a mask that covered up what was left of my previous self. There was one aspect of the mask that bothered me the most of all: my nose. It was obvious, it seemed bigger and was noticeable than before; it was a flaw I couldn't avoid.

I got anxious everytime I examined my nose in the mirror, trying to locate a concealed deformity that would account for its prominence. It became a center of my self hatred and a representation of the flaws I thought Made me who I was. These early experiences created a complicated mosaic of grief and guilt in the passageways of my mind. My nose served as a painful reminder of my alleged defects, and my self-esteem was like a delicate vase that had been mistreated for years.

Chapter 3(the encounter)

Life has an odd way of giving us opportunities that feels like lifelines. In the midst of my constant struggle of self esteem, it was on one of these nights that I first met him- the boy whose presence would brighten my life for a moment before bringing it further into the shadows.

His name, James promised the warmth and compassion I had never experienced. But there was a cloud over the whole situation that made me feel insecure. You see he had been after my friend first before he focused on me. I couldn't get rid of the impression that I was just a back up plan, a consolation prize if he couldn't get her to like him. Despite the bond we had, this information bothered me. I felt as though I had been forced into a race I had no chance of winning. In the back of my mind I kept wondering if he still has feeling for her which made me question everything. I questioned every compliment and display of affection he gave me because I had a sneaking suspicion that he could still be thinking of her.

James expressed genuine curiosity about me, which had never happened to me before. His eyes drilled into my soul with a depth of empathy that made me feel as though he could see the agony bubbling beneath the surface. His ability to listen with his heart as well as his ears caused me to crave something I had suppressed for far too long.

For the first time, someone cared enough to ask about my dreams, my fears and my past. He guided me through a maze of my emotions by holding my hand, helping me deal with my low self esteem issues and my diagnosed dependent personality disorder that has been a secret burden on my shoulders. The ghost of my past disappeared in his presence and i opened up to him. I bared my soul, sharing stories of my fears as a child, the constant comparisons and high expectations. It seemed as though I had found a haven where showing weakness was welcomed with sympathy rather than judgement.

His kind demeanor was a balm for my battered self esteem and a rare window into the acceptance I had long yearned for.

Chapter 4(the red flags)

True, there was a night I'll never forget in the midst of my conflicted feelings and self doubt- a passionate intense night that made me rethink everything I had ever believed about myself. Despite the briefness of our interaction, it was an encounter that left a a mark- not only in my memory but also in my heart.

I had the best sex of my life that evening. It was a never ending maelstrom of lust and ecstasy, a night that vanished into dawn without a second's hesitation. For those hours, I experienced a fire inside me that had never been felt before thanks to James electric touch and kisses. Even in the middle of the night he drove to find me, his passion for me made me feel really desired, as I've never felt before. His excitement to be with me and his want to feel every part of my body appeared to validate his opinion that I was worth loving and pursuing.

I couldn't help but feel stupid the next morning when he left. I was reminded of the red flags I had chosen to ignore by hindsight . It should have given me a clear warning given the manner he clung to my body and his eagerness to be with me.

I blamed myself for falling prey to the temptation of temporary approval. I was so desperate to be wanted so bad that I ignored the red flag. I felt regret and unwavering conviction that I should have known better because I made myself vulnerable in the pursuit of affection. Even though it was tense and unforgettable, this experience would serve as a bitter reminder of how deeply insecure I was and how far I would go to feel accepted. It was a turning point in my life that made me doubt not only my own judgment but also the complexity of interpersonal relationships and sexual desire. He assured me that it wouldn't affect our friendship. He swore with all his heart.

Chapter 5(emotional roller coaster)

The encounter with James had 1st seemed like an escape,a brief solace for the self doubt raging. It was doomed to fade though just like all things that shine too brightly. And when it did, it left emptiness behind that was even darker and deeper.

I was compelled to cling on him as our bond grew stronger as an effort to fill the void inside me that had been for a long time. I started to act in a way that some may label as "clingy" in my quest to keep him close. It was an outcome I dreaded because it confirmed my long term

dependency.

But it was this clinginess that seemed to turn off James. I'll never forget the day he blocked me from all social media platforms. A heavy sense of abandonment gripped me and I was covered in a cloud of sadness. I was overcome with the sense that I had lost the only person who truly cared and expressed interest in me, serving as a clear reminder that I was naturally unlovable.

Even in my darkest hours I couldn't control my emotions. The need to speak with him, to defend my actions and to discover a way back into his life became overwhelming.

I bombarded him with texts, each one a plea, a rant, a declaration of my insecurities. I exposed myself in the hopes that he'll recognize the vulnerability behind the clinginess. After clicking "send", the minutes turned to hours and were filled with my mounting anxieties and self-doubt. My delusional self told me he'll reply. He'll say he's sorry. He'll offer some sort of consolation. I'm a nice person and I'm not sure I pushed him so far. He'll definitely reply. But he never did. He has made up his mind. I wasn't going to be a part of his routine anymore and he stuck by it.

I felt silly, exposed and foolish. It was as if I had given him a weapon just to see him use it to push himself further away. The realization that I pushed him away with my actions hurt more than I had ever anticipated.

I got a nagging feeling that he had just used me for the time being, that I was nothing more than a means for him to avoid his own issues. The bitter truth was that while I had looked to him for comfort, I had found myself feeling more vulnerable and broken than ever.

The encounter with James had become a sharp mirror for my own fears, a reflection of that emphasized every flaw and shortcomings.

Chapter 6(healing journey)

I must admit I haven't found a way to fully recover as this experience has left me emotionally bruised. It happened just a few days ago and all I'm left with is raw scars and lingering pain. I'm aware this healing journey won't follow a straight line when I start it. It would take time for wounds caused by my own desperation and scars left by his abandonment to heal.

Chapter 7 (reflection and growth)

My heart still hurts with the pain and anguish I feel after he left. Time hasn't passed but sometimes I doubt I can get over it. It's been about a week and it hasn't been smooth. I keep wondering why he wants nothing to do with me. Keep wondering when I'll be good enough for someone to actually want to keep me. But you see the thing is everyone would love you as much as you love yourself and I haven't been really kind to myself. I abandon myself and expect people to stay with me. But even when I learn to love and accept myself, there are times where self-doubt follows me like a relentless shadow.

The truth is that before James there has been others like him. Similar traits that run through and they've all left behind painful scars. Their choices and their acts makes me wonder at the back of my mind, making me question whether I am deserving of their love. It's a nagging uncertainty that taunts me in my quiet time, telling me I am naturally unlovable and doomed to live alone. I

wish I could say I have all the answers, that I have overcome my doubts and I am no longer hurting.

It doesn't just take the acknowledgment of the pain that makes it go away. It's the courage to admit that healing takes time and it's good to feel pain and have doubts as the road to self-love isn't so smooth. The worry of not finding love is a real one and I struggle with it everyday. But I've also come to realize that true love starts from within.

I will find the love I deserve and it all starts with the love I give myself.

Chapter 8(resolution)

I'm done compromising my self-worth for temporary comforts that gives me nothing but heartache, I realized that after encounter with James, and all the others before him. It's a choice driven by necessity, by a survival instinct that has finally shouted louder than my desire for approval from people.

For once in my life I choose myself. I'm going to learn to be more independent. I'm going to love and respect myself more. I've made a decision that might leave me alone, but I'm willing to be alone. I've come to realize that loving myself will protect me and my heart from being hurt all the time. So it's up to me to realize my worth and refuse to accept anything less than I deserve.

Knowing that my journey is continuing and that there may be times of vulnerability and insecurity helps me to proceed. But this time is different because I have a fresh strength that allows me to make my own decisions, love myself wholeheartedly, and forge a future according to my own terms.

I am a warrior of self-love and the creator of my own destiny, and I am strong in this resolution. On my journey, I may experience times of loneliness, but I choose to embrace that solitude as I explore the power and beauty inside of me.

Chapter 9(conclusion)

The encounter with James was just one thread in the complicated tapestry of my life, one that wove its way through the delicate fabric of self-esteem and self-love. It is an experience that has destroyed me, and in many ways, it did destroy my erroneous notions about my own value. As I journey into self-love, my scars and wounds from my previous heartbreaks only serve as reminders, to jolt me back when I'm ever caught slipping again. But they'll no longer define who I am. This is a promise to myself.

With this newly discovered freedom and love of myself, I am prepared to face the fact that whatever the future might bring, I AM ENOUGH.