

## THE WRONG HEART

BY Nwadiaro Paula

### **Chapter 1: A Mother's Desperation**

It was a warm summer evening, the kind that made you appreciate the simple joys of life. The baseball match had been a thrilling experience, and we were heading back to our car, hand in hand, a perfect family moment in the making. I couldn't have asked for anything better. Jeremiah, my husband, was all smiles, and Rhys, our 10-year-old son, couldn't stop talking about how the match went and his favorite players. I wasn't a fan of baseball but I'd watch it a million times just to see the smile on my boys' faces.

I'd never really thought about it, but life could change in a split second. The air was filled with laughter and excitement, but it all turned to chaos in an instant.

We all held hands while we crossed the street to our Audi. Then all of a sudden, the world shattered with the screeching tires, the deafening crash, and the shattering glass. Darkness swallowed me, and when I opened my eyes, I was in a sterile hospital room, wires and machines beeping, surrounding me.

Jeremiah lay motionless in the bed beside mine. It took a split second for me to realize.

"Where's Rhys?" I questioned myself in panic. I didn't realize the rush of doctors saying things to me, things I couldn't understand.

"My baby.."

"Where's my baby?"

A lump formed in my throat as I realized the unthinkable—Rhys was gone. My heart ached, and I could hardly breathe. The doctor's words were a blur as they explained the severity of Jeremiah's injuries and the loss of our dear boy. I was trapped in my nightmare from which there seemed to be no escape.

How had I lost everything that meant the world to me in a split second??

It couldn't be. I could feel my eyes shutting from whatever the doctors gave me. When I'd wake up, I'm sure I'd realize this was all a big nightmare.

### **Chapter 2: A Heartbreaking Choice**

It wasn't a nightmare, I realized when I woke up and as I clutched into my baby, my life. He was going to turn eleven in a couple of days. He'd never get to graduate middle school, I wouldn't get my early morning hugs or see the smile on his face ever again. Days passed turning into weeks, and I clung to the remnants of our life together. I couldn't find it in me to enter the house

that was once home. I stayed with my parents, crying myself to sleep every waking second. I had given up on life, quit my job, and spent the rest of my days talking to my husband's comatose body.

"Fight for me, Jeremiah. I need you" as another trail of tears followed. I could feel his parents watching me, John and Celest had been trying to be strong. The grief weighed heavy on me, like an anchor pulling me into the depths of despair, I wonder how it felt on them so see their only son fighting for his life. But during my pain, the doctors approached me with a proposition that cut even deeper.

"Mrs Brisque, could you spare me a second of your time?", the doctor interrupted.

I remembered him, Dr. Kim. I left the room with him.

"Yes, how may I help you? Do you have any more reports on my husband? Is he okay?" I bombarded him with questions

"I was wondering if..." and then he delivered the question.

He wanted my baby's heart. They wanted my babies heart.

Despite the shock and the overwhelming grief, I managed to sign the paperwork they presented after days of overthinking, guilt, grief, anger, and denial. It was an agonizing decision, but one that carried a glimmer of hope. My heartache eased slightly as I thought about how my baby couldn't live for me but he could live on through others, giving the gift of life to those in need.

### **Chapter 3: The Wrong Heart**

Time passed, but the pain never truly subsided. Each day was a battle, and each night, a tormenting reminder of what had been taken from us. My husband still hadn't woken up from his coma. I managed to go back to work as it was the only thing keeping me sane. I refused to pack up the memories of my son around the house although I could feel it in my soul, the absence of him. I visited my husband frequently, I told him about my days, cried, and begged him to come back to me, to give me a sign. A flicker of hope, anything but I got no response and the days bled into one another. And then, one rainy afternoon, I received a letter that would change everything.

Tears blurred my vision as I read the words, the cruel reality of the situation sinking in.

*Dear Ms. Brisquè,*

*I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to inform you about a significant development regarding your son's heart donation. As you may recall, you generously chose to donate your son's heart, a noble decision that can bring hope and renewed life to someone in need.*

*We are pleased to inform you that after an extensive search, we have found a suitable recipient for your son's heart. The recipient's name is Matthew Timothee, and he has been patiently waiting for a donor match that aligns with his medical needs.*

*Your selfless act of donating your son's heart will provide Matthew with a chance at a healthier life, and it reflects the spirit of compassion and generosity that defines our community.*

*We understand that this may be an emotional time for you, and we want to assure you that our medical team will handle the transplant procedure with the utmost care and professionalism.*

*If you have any questions or concerns regarding the donation process or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact our transplant coordinator, [Dr. Esther Crawford].*

*Once again, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your compassionate decision to donate your son's heart. Your kindness will forever be remembered, and it will make a profound difference in Matthew Timothee's life.*

*Thank you for your understanding and support during this challenging time.*

*Sincerely,*

*Dr Levine.*

My son's heart, the heart that had once beat so joyously, now resided within the very man who had torn our family apart, the drunk 27-year-old driver, Michael Timothee, who had shown no remorse for his actions, left scot-free without taking responsibility for the lives he had taken, the lives he had altered all because he was the Mayor's son.

I crumpled to the floor, clutching the letter to my chest. The world spun around me as a mixture of sorrow, anger, and regret engulfed me. How could this happen? The injustice of it all was suffocating, and the weight of my decision to sign those papers bore down on me like an insurmountable burden.

#### **Chapter 4:A mother's anguish.**

The revelation gnawed at me, a constant reminder of the cruel twist of fate that had befallen us. I wrestled with anger and despair, unable to find solace in a situation that seemed utterly hopeless. I couldn't change the past, couldn't undo the unthinkable mistake that had allowed Rhys' heart to end up in the chest of his killer.

A mirage of thoughts clouded my mind as I drove to the hospital. I had to put a stop to this madness.

"How could they?!!!"

I screamed into my steering wheel as tears filled my eyes. Looking up, I found myself staring at a poster of him and his father, mocking me.

Was fate laughing at me?

How could one destroy my family, and my life in less than seconds and have the nerve to take, what was still left of my son? This had to be a cruel joke.

I couldn't bring my son back or turn back the hands of time to save my family from the accident but I would fight for justice to the last of

### **Chapter 5: Her Redemption.**

Amidst the darkness that had enveloped my life, I found a glimmer of hope, a way to turn my pain into purpose. I couldn't bring Rhys back, but I could make sure his memory lived on in a meaningful way. I channeled my anger and sorrow into advocacy, waiting one day for my husband to awaken and hold me again.

I became a voice for stricter drunk-driving laws and better organ transplant procedures. I vowed to prevent other families from enduring the same heart-wrenching ordeal we had faced. Amid my advocacy, I founded the Rhys Foundation, dedicated to helping families affected by drunk driving and supporting organ transplant recipients.

### **Chapter 6: The Unyielding Battle**

Years later as I delved deeper into my advocacy work, I found myself facing a formidable adversary – the Timothee family. Their influence in the community and their connection to the Mayor made it nearly impossible to hold Michael accountable for his actions. Despite my relentless efforts to seek justice, I faced resistance at every turn.

One gloomy morning, I stood outside the courthouse, clutching a folder full of evidence, ready to confront the legal system that seemed rigged in favor of the privileged. My lawyer, Sarah, stood by my side, her determination matching my own.

"We'll do everything we can, Rachel," she reassured me, her eyes reflecting the frustration we both felt.

Inside the courtroom, I watched as the Timothee family's high-priced lawyers skillfully manipulated the proceedings. Their arguments painted Michael as a victim, conveniently omitting the fact that he had shattered our lives with his reckless actions.

I took the stand, my voice trembling with a mix of anger and grief. "Your Honor, I implore you to consider the lives that were lost and the irreparable damage caused by the defendant's actions."

The judge, a stern-looking man, nodded, but his expression revealed a sense of helplessness. The influence of the Timothee family loomed large, casting a shadow over the proceedings.

As the trial dragged on, I couldn't help but question the fairness of the justice system. It seemed that money and power could shield someone from the consequences of their actions, no matter

how heinous. Despite our best efforts, the verdict came as a crushing blow – Michael Timothee was acquitted of all charges.

Tears welled up in my eyes as I left the courtroom, my heart heavy with the weight of injustice. I felt defeated, but I couldn't give up. Rhys deserved better. My husband, Jeremiah, needed justice too, even though he remained in a coma, a constant reminder of the pain that had been inflicted on our family.

### **Chapter 7: Holding on to Hope**

More months went by since that tragic incident, and I continued to visit Jeremiah at the hospital, sharing my struggles, my hopes, and my unwavering love for him. The doctors had given little hope for his recovery, but I clung to the belief that one day he would wake up, that our love would be enough to bring him back to me.

"Jeremiah, I know you can hear me," I whispered, holding his hand as I sat by his bedside. "I won't give up on you, just like I haven't given up on seeking justice for Rhys."

The machines continued to beep, the monitors displaying the same data they had for years. But I refused to lose faith. Love had the power to work miracles, or so I desperately hoped.

In the quiet moments, when it was just Jeremiah and me, I could almost convince myself that I saw a flicker of movement, the subtlest hint that he was still there, fighting to return to me.

I knew he would one day and I was ready to welcome him with my arms wide open.

### **Chapter 8: The Unexpected Meeting**

On a chilly autumn evening, as I left the hospital, a voice called out to me from behind. I turned to see a man, his face etched with lines of sorrow and regret. It was Matthew Timothee, the recipient of Rhys' heart.

"I need to talk to you," he said, his voice filled with a mixture of guilt and sadness.

I hesitated for a moment before nodding, curiosity getting the better of me. We found a quiet corner in the hospital cafeteria and sat down.

"I want you to know that I'm aware of the pain my brother caused your family," Matthew began, his eyes brimming with tears. "I've carried that burden with me every day since the accident."

I listened, my heart torn between anger and empathy. Here was a man who had received my son's heart, a piece of Rhys living on in him, and he was expressing remorse for something he hadn't personally done.

"I've tried to make amends in my own way," Matthew continued.

I couldn't utter a word and just watched him talk. My son's heart was beating in his chest. I knew I would never forgive him fully so destroying my family but I could try for the sake of my son.

As I listened to him, his words struck a chord deep within me. While I couldn't change the past, I could shape the future. Matthew's actions were a step towards redemption, a testament to the transformative power of organ donation.

As we parted ways that evening, I couldn't help but wonder if this unexpected encounter was a sign. Perhaps there was a way for our two families to find healing and closure, to honor the memory of Rhys and the second chance at life that he had given to Matthew.

### **Chapter 9: A Legacy of Love**

After that fateful encounter and though the pain of losing Rhys and the injustice of Michael's acquittal never truly faded, I found solace in knowing that our actions had made a difference. Rhys' memory lived on, not just in my heart, but in the lives we had touched and the change we had brought about through the foundation family would ever have to g the hurt I and my family went through.

And then, one miraculous day, as I sat by Jeremiah's bedside, whispering words of love and hope, something incredible happened. His fingers twitched, a faint sign of life returning to his dormant body.

Tears of joy streamed down my face as I called for the doctors. Jeremiah was finally waking up from his long coma. It was a miracle, a testament to the power of love and perseverance.

As he opened his eyes and looked at me with recognition, a smile spread across his face, and I knew that our love had triumphed over tragedy. Our family would never be the same, but we had found a way to heal and rebuild our lives, honoring the memory of Rhys and the enduring power of love.

**THE END**