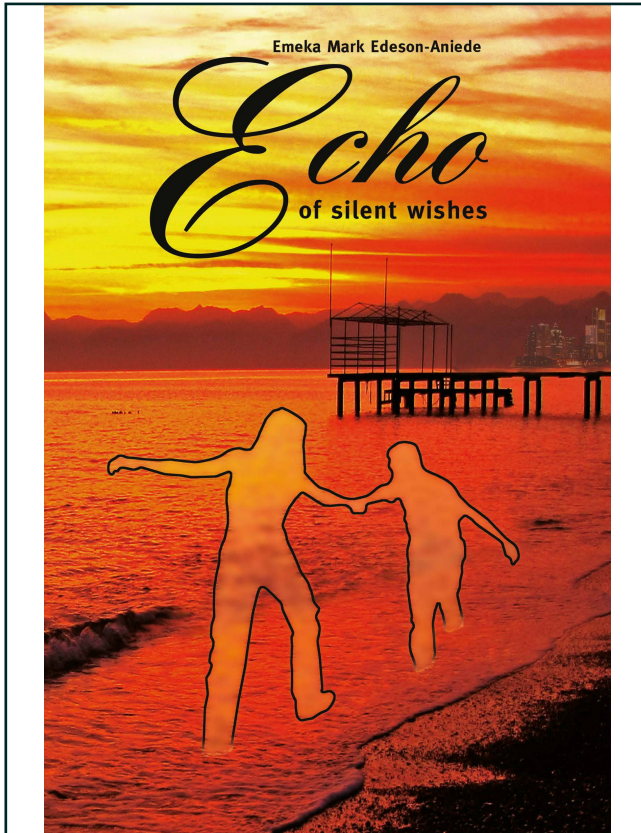




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Echo of silent wishes



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CHAPTER

ONE

Heide Hubinger regretted her life. She believed she would have been beautiful today if only she had taken better care for herself in her youth. Her features were regular and appealing despite noticeable fatigues. Her long brown hair draped down to her shoulders; she would hardly ever visit a hairdresser's shop to have it washed and styled for a different look. Her fingers had strong, shining nails which she never bothered to polish. And friendly dimples often appeared on her cheeks whenever she smiled, although it was a rare occasion to see her smile so openly. Whenever she did, she would show teeth that were badly stained from a long habit of smoking and people would stare at her teeth; this often made her feel very uncomfortable. All of her problems and that one in particular reminded Heide of her past.

In her sober moments, Heide would recall the troubles of her youth that had made her drop out of school. How then she had took to street life with Marcus Adolf, her teen boyfriend. Marcus was feared by everybody in his group of bully friends that he had gathered around him for his ruthlessness towards anyone who dared to question his authority. He would never waste any time to bawl out anyone who was getting on his nerves, regardless if boy or girl. Therefore, he was nicknamed 'Macho' by the girls at school. Soon his nickname replaced his real name within the school premises and around his neighborhood where he used to treat everyone with the same disrespect.

Heide's memories of the ordeals she had suffered by the bully boys at school still made her shiver. By these guys who often used dangerous weapons to threaten fellow school mates with,



especially the girls, and in particular the weaker and helpless ones among them like she was. How she would yell on top of her voice whenever they came after her, how much she then was hoping that someone would come to her aid and scare those trouble-shooters away. But hardly anybody had ever turned up to help her out. To her biggest disappointment, nobody seemed to care to come to her aid. They all just seemed to hurry towards their respective destinations, like zombies controlled by the spells of their master, while the bully boys enjoyed watching her scream hysterically.

However, all that would come to an end as soon as she became Macho's girl. When her dream to become Macho's girlfriend and to be left alone by the bully boys came true, there was a marked change of attitude towards her. She realized how suddenly she was treated with respect, even like a queen, by her school mates.

Heide always wondered why the school authorities didn't do anything to stop those bullies from attacking other pupils. "We always complained, but no one would listen to us," she would continue in her contemplations.

During those moments, Heide would roam in the memories of her past. She would blame everyone who should have put an end to the too many wrongs in her youth. She felt as if she had been dumped into a lonely and hostile world by her parents just to perish. That was how she had come to the conclusion that if she could not beat the bullies, she would better join them in order to be safe from further agony.

Heide therefore began to play a game to attract the attention of the hardest young guy around. When she got close to him and became part of his gang of bullies, her life changed. She was no longer fearful, she became the one who was feared and envied by her school mates, particularly by the girls. This sudden change had given her the greatest thrill of her life since the other bullies around became very respectful towards her because of her



relationship with Macho. Heide felt honored to be with him and to be a member of his group. She was now safe, and that was what mattered a great deal to her.

There were times, though, when Heide would reason that maybe without the bullies, she would have had a good and normal school life and maybe would even have gone to university after school. These considerations always caused her bitter regrets about the turn her life had taken. If there was anything in her life that would get her in a really bad mood, it was memories of her childhood. For her, there was no doubt that her parents were responsible for her predicaments. They had not been looking after her at all but abandoned her to the care of an old nanny who had become like a mother to her.

Heide's parents had no time to care for their only child. Her father insisted that Heide's birth had been a mistake from the very beginning when her mother had suddenly decided to become pregnant without asking his opinion on the subject, too. Her mother was well aware of the problems involved before against his will, she had decided not to abort the child. The exact reason why she had taken this decision, much against their common convictions, remained a mystery to him that he just could not understand. He therefore insisted that everything that transpired between them as a result of Heide's birth was her responsibility and that she was the one who in the first place had wanted all the trouble.

Katharine Rudiwisky, Heide's mother, simply known as 'Kay' or 'Miss Kay' among the people around her, suddenly seemed to have realized that the work of childcare was too much trouble for her to bear all alone. She now persistently pestered her man for taking part in the care for their baby. He could at least get up once at night to feed her or change her wet nappies!

Graffinkel Hubinger found Kay's demands absurd to say the least. He wondered why she failed to face the damage she was doing to



their relationship through her persistence. He was not willing to succumb to it. From that time on, their differences got worse by and by and their relationship began heading towards a bitter end.

Once, in the middle of the night, Graffinkel would shout at Kay to stop the baby from crying so that he could get some sleep. About this, a heated argument ensued between them in the course of which Graffinkel – in a fit of anger and maybe because of the frustrating situation he was facing, called their new born baby a mockery duplication he would never recognize as a true part of himself. Kay had clasped her hands over her mouth in shock, unable to believe what she had just heard. A brief interlude of suspension between them went by before Kay abandoned her efforts not to be emotional; she burst out into painful crying that lasted almost throughout the night. From that very moment Heide's parents were no longer on speaking terms with one another, although they still lived together in one home.

Several months had gone by and they still had very little to say to each other. They lived like strangers in the same house where they had known moments of peaceful resolution and happiness. Neither of them was willing to surrender and speak with the other, not until close friends of their families noticed their cold attitude towards each other and began to ask questions. It was only then that Heide's parents began to realize the need to sort out their differences. It dawned upon them that things might still get worse if they continued to live like strangers every day unless they would try to save their relationship quickly as possible. The both of them seemed to agree on this point.

When Kay and Graffinkel finally reconciled and settled their differences, they came to the conclusion that they would need to employ a nanny to take care of Heide. This would enable them to regain their freedom which they seemed to have lost when Heide was born and to attend to their jobs and carry out their daily activities without being hindered by the care for their baby.



Meanwhile, the birth of Heide had brought discomfort and unacceptable changes rather than joy to both her parents and almost caused their separation. It was Graffinkel who made the first move to apologize after many months had gone by since his cruel remark about his daughter. He described it as a deplorable mistake that he would never ever make again.

“Kay!” Graffinkel had called out one evening in a rather subdued tone of voice. “I’m truly sorry for every wrong word I’ve said. Of course Heide is our child, Kay, yours as well as mine. It is just that I’m so tired of our constant quarrels about who should look after her. Maybe the trouble was with me. Indeed, I believed that I was too old to begin to learn what this fatherly care is all about. Besides, you know my story and also my decision not to father any child which I made when I was still young. And just as well you know that I myself never had the opportunity to be pampered and be taken much care of. So I thought that raising a child was if not meaningless yet not important to me. Why would my mother die to abandon me when I was just four years old, leaving me without her care? And as if missing her in my life was not enough, any of her relations to whose care I was entrusted died subsequently. Finally, I had to grow up in an orphanage.” By this, Graffinkel had touched a sore point in his life. Kay was surprised at this confession of a man who usually was not making many words. He had sounded so wounded that she did not want him to continue.

“You need to understand that death is a necessary end awaiting every one of us, no matter how it comes. You told me your mother suffered from cancer and died. But if she had not died, she would certainly have showered you with motherly love and care. The important thing right now is how you treat your own family, our daughter and me,” she told him quietly.

Both parents seemingly failed to realize that their problem was a result of their profound commitment to their respective work. They loved it so dearly that they had no room for anything else in their



lives. Just like many other hard working people, they were living the life of workaholics. Unfortunately, this attitude was common among many people of their generation in their country. They were becoming more and more enslaved by the so-called development and their self-defined goals to measure up to in life. Like a doctrine, the dedication to their fatherland had been laid down for them by their parents who rebuilt its shattered prestige after the war. Now this dedication tended to turn the common man into a work horse and take the meaning of real life and moral consciousness away from their society and replace it by adoration of excellence and the will to exceed in life. Yet, each day passed by and they were not able to reach those goals. As much as their social virtues as well as their family life were on the decline, there was nevertheless a general believe among them that they should not relent in any way.

“Sweetheart, you know that people like you and I will break down and fall real sick without a job. Actually I think the best thing for us would be to look for someone, maybe a nanny who can help us with the care for our child while we go to work,” he suggested politely to solve the problem and to settle terms with Kay.

Kay had listened with great enthusiasm, wishing that this moment had come already some time ago. Yet, as she did not want to be the one to always hold back her anger, she asked Graffinkel in a rather dejected and cold voice:

“Would that make up for many months of squabbles and cold silence between us and heal the wounds we inflicted on each other as a result of the birth of our child – or my child, as you’ve bluntly said?”

“Kay! Forgive me sweetheart, I’m truly sorry for every bad word I said to hurt you and our child! If you can forgive me, let’s start again from where we stopped,” Graffinkel pleaded, a broad apologetic smile flushing across his face as he stepped forward closer to his woman and embraced her.



“And don’t forget about the recent reports of rampant child mishandling or even murder committed by nannies,” Kay warned before agreeing to his suggestion. A slight smile crept on her face and broadened as she walked towards him and into his arms and they kissed each other. In her mind, she was desperate to get things between them back to the state of before so that she could get back to her job and her normal life. Although Graffinkel promised to change and from now on help her with the care for their baby, he feared that his help might not be enough since Kay was so eager to return to her job. If both of them worked like they did before, neither of them would have sufficient time for their newborn baby.

“We could consult one of these employment agencies to get us a person who will help us, a mature and good nanny who should treat our daughter as if she was her own,” Graffinkel suggested with a smile. “She could have the extra visitor’s room to live with us, if you wouldn’t mind. I know the services of a nanny are very expensive these days, but we could manage to pay her wages, if that would make you happy, too,” he said.

“Of course, that’s a good idea and it’ll make me happy if we could find someone who would take care for our daughter like her own child,” Miss Kay consented.

That was how Heide’s parents settled their differences and together began a new life. Two weeks later when Heide was just nine months old, Ingrid, an elderly woman of Polish decent, whose life had contained little excitement so far, was recruited to care for Heide’s upbringing. Ingrid’s past was a sour point in her life, with several broken marriages she made great efforts to forget. She would give anything not to be reminded about them. The most painful thing for her was not to have a child of her own. Every possible effort that she had made to have a baby turned out to be fruitless. Taking care for other people’s babies for her was an ideal way to overcome the shock of having experienced many miscarriages.



She was withdrawn and sometimes forgetful when thoughts of her past came to haunt her, but she was very dutiful and obedient. It was under her care that Heide grew up. Ingrid doted on Heide, doing everything the little girl wanted. In this way, Heide did not develop any moral decorum. She did neither learn to be obedient nor to take responsibility for her conduct and bear the consequences. "Indeed my parents are to be blamed," Heide would think.

Heide's parents were not married and lived together also without an intention of marrying each other. Graffinkel Hubinger was working as a machine operator. His work was more important to him than anything else, and he had no interest in anything that other people would call a normal life. After a divorce that had almost ruined him and made him to live on the street like a homeless lunatic, he had made a vow to himself to never marry again in his entire life. Consequently, many years had passed before he had found the courage to commit to another relationship with a woman. He noticed that he as well as Kay was reluctant to get closer. When they eventually did, he discovered that they had similar feelings in regard to almost every aspect of human relationship. He could not believe it when he found himself by and by falling in love again with Katharine as likewise, she was falling in love with him. Eventually, they decided to get even closer and live together as lovers. They had different views on some subjects which they promised each other to respect, but on one subject they agreed completely: to them, marriage was just a religious invention that was meant to enslave the human race and force people to live in bondage.

Kay and Graffinkel were convinced that marriage was not a true proof of a good relationship and neither was child-bearing. In their opinion, this was just a tedious mistake which had deprived many couples of harmonious and long lasting relationships void of any religious burdens or social obligations. Therefore, many relationships were often doomed from the beginning before they



even started. Kay and Graffinkel had gone through such experiences and the ordeal they experienced in order to disentangle themselves from such relationships had been agonizing. Now, if children had been involved in the whole drama, what would have been their fate? They could not imagine.

Consequently, there was hardly any bonding between Heide and her parents. Heide tried to compare them with other parents who cared very much for their children at home as well as at school. They were always there to pick them up after school, unlike her own parents who were always too busy to even attend to parental meetings, not to mention that they would ever have come to pick her up. These duties as well as taking care for Heide were left to the nanny.

Heide would remember that she had never seen her parents talk about anything in a friendly atmosphere. Their lives followed a rigid pattern of leaving the house very early in the morning and returning very late at night. As a child, she remembered having often seen her parents rushing out of the house and into their car with a cup of coffee in their hands as they drove off to work. And on arrival back home, usually late at night, they would disappear into separate bedrooms for the rest of the night. Only her mother, who was probably occasionally stricken by conscience, would turn up in her room to ask her about her day or to give her a goodnight kiss before she would disappear into her bedroom. Despite the lack of closeness between them, Heide had no doubt at all that her mother loved her dearly. Her father never showed her any love, she was certain that he did not like her. Whenever Heide asked him for help against the bullies at school, she would always receive more or less the same answer. And the angry and irritated responses she always received from him any time she tried to talk with him was evidence enough to her that her father did not love her. Therefore, Heide never built up any love for her father, she rather hated him. "Look here, young lady, I have too many things to do, so you better go and talk to your mother. Maybe she's got



more time to settle these matters for you,” he would always tell young Heide who did not understand why her father would not like to help her.

“But at school I don’t have any rest from bully boys,” Heide would yell back helplessly, in tears.

“You must learn to strike back and protect yourself; the world is full of oppositions,” Hubinger would always repeat and then emphasize that her problems would worsen if any of her parents showed up at school to defend her.

Heide often wondered why God had not endowed girls with the physical strength of those bullies at school. She often thought of fighting them back but would quickly drop the idea because she realized that whoever won such fights with one of these bullies would have to go through much humiliation and distress from the others. She was much distressed with the situation at school. She thought about changing schools but was frightened when she heard that it might be even rougher in any other school than she could imagine.

Those were the realities of adolescence in her country. Young people were harassed under various aspects: at home by some parents who wanted to bring up their kids as to suit their own purposes, and at school by the efforts of indifferent teachers to inculcate their pupils with moral etiquette. All of this was suitable to make school life gruesome for some of the children, especially for the weaker ones. The reluctance of school authorities to control some children’s abnormal behavior seemed to worsen the whole situation. The people who were entrusted with the children’s educational upbringing at school should be in position to control any brutality among them – they seemed helpless, cared little or were not willing at all to do something.

Heide did not know that she was not alone in her childhood bitterness, she was just one among many kids in her country who



were suffering the same fate and who kept asking the same question: “Why me of all people?”

These problems may have been the result of many broken homes in a society system that itself was already broken. Nevertheless, the main concern was not who or what was responsible for these problems. What was worse was that like this, the younger generation was exposed to an environment of disorder that would be affecting their lives and their future. The existence of this environment of disorder that could be seen and felt everywhere had caused the number of juvenile delinquencies in her country to increase. But how could this state of things ever contribute to their much-touted and cherished freedom of expression, to privacy and right of existence, while they seemed to shy away from all forms of social and cultural assimilation? Morality was seen as an unnecessary encumbrance to this freedom of existence.

During this time, Heide’s fear grew stronger day by day. The big boys were gaining upper hand in everything; they were free to just do almost anything they wanted, since there was little or no supervision of activities among the pupils at school. Teachers would plan their lessons according to stipulated curriculums and not teach anything that would impact moral decorum to the children. Embittered parents as well as school authorities often complained about being handicapped by the children’s welfare rights which restricted any method of children’s upbringing different from those compliant with the welfare law, both at home and at school. In the case of some children, there would have been an urgent need to try it another way. Therefore, head teachers virtually did not have any control over their pupils any longer. At Heide’s school, there was a reign of terror and the parents as well as the school authorities blamed the responsibility on each other! Therefore, Heide was totally and helplessly frustrated with her teenage life.



CHAPTER

TWO

Finally, Heide had taken a step forward without really knowing what she was doing to herself; after all she was about to only convert her frustrations. She made up her mind about how to get close to one of the bully boys who was popular among the ruffians at her school and in his neighborhood. All that she wanted was to get some protection that would give her relief and take away her fears.

Marcus Adolf stood out from the other school bullies. Heide, without any experience at all about what getting involved in a relationship like this one would entail for her, went all out to let Marcus see she was available for him. She had no clue of what a relationship with the opposite sex was all about; all she knew were things her friends had told her about boyfriend and girlfriend relationships. Marcus, on other hand, had gathered more than enough experience in this respect.

At a very young age Marcus Adolf, popularly known as Macho, had begun to bring girls to his and his parents' home. He would ask his mother to stay away from his room. Though he was still a child, his mother was the one who received instructions from him instead the other way round. He had the say in the house while his father was away fighting somewhere in Africa as a mercenary. At home, his mother would jump from one end of their house to the other just to fulfill all his needs and wishes. In the absence of his father Marcus would not take instructions from anyone else. "He's just a little child, he'll learn as soon as he grows up," his mother would explain to those who complained about his rudeness. Somewhen his teachers at school stopped complaining



to his mother after he had warned them and promised to teach them a bitter lesson if they would not stop tampering with his life. He told them to take care of their personal problems and let him take care of his own. Consequently, he was then left alone. Therefore, whatever Marcus knew was what he had taught himself.

When one day, Marcus Adolf noticed Heide's efforts to approach him, he put on a broad smile and made his way over to her. She saw him coming; her courage seemed to desert her and was replaced by a childish shyness as she stood still, almost trembling from fear in front of him.

"Hello," Macho said, breaking the silence, after he had cleared his throat a couple of times. That was how they began. Not long afterwards, Heide received her first kiss from Macho which brought their relationship to a start.

It was not too long before Heide began to feel the impact of Marcus' harshness towards everyone around him. She was convinced that there was no reason why he should sometimes be so rude, even more there was no reason for him to be loud and harsh. There were times when for no identifiable reasons, he would suddenly change from a loving boyfriend into a vulnerable looking young man. On these occasions Heide often felt helpless, like a fly in a spider's web. The state of confusion she always found herself in never seemed to make the situation easier for her to understand. Her determination to get male protection was what encouraged her to carry on with him even when faced with her worries. Perhaps that was what scared everyone at school away from him: his brutal method to exert his authority without differentiating between the sex and age of anyone who became victim of his anger. Heide's fears were eventually put to rest when he began to drum words of love and admiration into her ears, assuring her that he would never hurt her because he loved her so much. With time, she felt that she was falling in love with him, too, and that meant a lot to her at this time. Here was someone



who was protecting her and at same time telling her how much he loved her. She hoped that by and by he would learn how to treat her the right way. She reassured herself that her decision to be with Marcus had been the right one. From this time on, Heide was constantly in his company, accepting his ways of life irrespective of his moods.

It did not take long before the news of their relationship began to spread around their school and their neighborhood with every move they made. They were seen together everywhere, kissing, hugging and caressing each other in public places like adults – when instead, they should have been at school. The school authority seemed ignorant of all their misbehavior, school skipping and loose living in and around the school premises. The school authority pretended not to be in possession of any means to stop them from what they were doing. Rather than to get involved and risk to be disgraced or ridiculed or even to get hurt by those ruthless ruffians, nobody would ever try to instruct or appeal to such pupils like Marcus Adolf or his gang members. Though Marcus virtually had encounter with the teachers as well as the school authorities, he seriously warned them to mind their own business or take the risk to be taught a bitter lesson. Therefore, the school authorities claimed that the children's welfare right prevented them from taking any further action.

Heide, who was getting used to have Macho around her all the time, began to develop a strong affection for him and relied on his presence. Whenever he was not with her, she would yearn for him until he was back. She hardly survived any period of misunderstanding between them and, only by and by she began to understand what it meant to have a close male partner. The person in question made the whole situation more complicated and even intriguing. She often found it difficult to accept or understand whenever he did not want her to be at his side.

Somewhen Heide's body began to undergo changes which she did not understand, and there was nobody she could have gone



to or to whom she could have confided her troubles. Her parents were not there to explain to her that such changes were inevitable for everyone in the process of coming of age. Therefore, Heide's young life was marred with difficulties and complicated matters which she could not handle alone. Thinking about it, she came to the conclusion that there was no other choice than to accept things the way they were.

Suddenly Marcus Adolf began to absent himself and barely showed up at school any more. Heide was irritated and disappointed about the new turn their relationship had taken. Marcus just told her one day that he was fed up with school and was going to give up. At first, she thought it was only a joke until he told her where to look for him anytime she wanted to see him. As she sat huddled up alone in a corner, crying profusely, the thought came to her mind that there were many ways in life to survive. She would have to leave school and get some freedom for herself.

Heide finally resolved to quit school and go with her boyfriend. Few days later she dropped out of school without her parents' knowledge. Her parents had no idea about their daughter having left school and no longer attending classes. Heide was in the middle form at high school when she dropped out. After many weeks Heide's mother noticed strange changes in her young daughter. For the first time, she was visibly worried about Heide's strange attitudes.

"Hey, Heide!" she called out one evening as soon as she stepped into the house and perceived some unusual odors. As Heide reluctantly threw her room door ajar, Kay suddenly found herself in a haze of heavy smoke that hit her face and forcing its way through her mouth, made her cough. Miss Kay was alarmed by what she saw in her daughter's room; several youngsters were puffing and drinking alcohol. Kay became furious, but she tried very hard to restrain her rage.