



D A M N O F T H E

SAGA

THE TALE OF
THE ANGUISHED MAN
AND
HIS BELOVED CAR

M. Rifqi Rafiuddin

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You can accomplish anything if you have trust and belief.

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Chapter 1

The Transition

It is the most desired emotion in everyone. The need to be happy. The point in someone's life where he or she feels satisfied.

And that point seems to have arrived for youthful Jazztar. It had finally arrived, the day Jazztar transitions from being a boy to a man. His 18th birthday. And a special surprise awaited him. And it is not what everyone would expect.

One might say the best if not the greatest way to celebrate the coming of age is a big, extravagant birthday party filled with blasting music or a family gathering where they sing a birthday song in front of a cake. And of course, being gifted with many presents. Jazztar, on the other hand, wanted to start his birthday by buying his present, a promise kept by his father, Zikri. And so they did. The two set off to buy Jazztar's present, at a used car store.

Yes, exactly. A used car store. Jazztar wanted to buy a used car for his birthday. Oddly, he was barely old enough to drive

at the time. He made a pact between himself and his father stating that he would get his car and wait a couple more years or until he passes his driver's test. And he specifically chooses an old-fashioned car instead of the new, high tech cars.

See, Jazztar had different interests. He was a young teenager who is not like the others. He would be categorized as the typical quiet boy in school and he would speak very few words at the time. His teachers wonder if he was doing this to garner attention or if he was doing a "well done" job of ostracizing himself from the class. Although his grades were not too bad to sort of speak. He had a vast imagination and had a passion for new things. While some of the students from his school had specific future goals, Jazztar was still all over the place. But inside the mind of Jazztar was one wish, to hold a wheel of a rusted car and drive it along the highways while constantly switching gears like those country movies. So he waited for the moment to arrive. His face tells it all. They were smiling all the way at the car dealership.

Zikri was prepared and determined for the trip. He planned out which of the many car dealerships across Sarawak he wanted to bring his son to. He wanted to go to a store where there were a variety of cars for his son to see and choose from. And so he did pick one, and it fitted with what he needed. Only thing was that it was out of town meaning it would be a long drive before his son would see even one old car.

But a promise is a promise. Zikri took his son on a one-and-a-half-hour long drive across the state to the store. It was a pleasing and oddly mediating drive. Jazztar was seen looking

out the window and saw trees and mountains as far as his eyes could see. He started doing what he did best, imagining. His mind could stop thinking for even one bit. His overactive imagination would fill up a small exercise book in a day. And that's what Zikri felt proud of. Zikri was the most important person in Jazztar's life and vice versa. Zikri was also the only person Jazztar had to look up to for life advice and morals. The journey of parenting was a bumpy roller-coaster for Zikri.

Chapter 2

A Father's Sacrifice

Zikri was a single parent with a single child. He had gone through a difficult time in the past with many of his situations being too personal to be heard by others. It took a toll on him physically and emotionally. He had to fight through countless arguments and failures before even finding a living at an old age. However, Zikri grew up with a one-word motto, belief. As time passed by Zikri stuck to his motto until his opportunities come by chance. He said to himself that hard work is second and believing and dreaming is the first. And so he did, he began dreaming and believing until he finally achieved it. With such patience he managed to find a sustainable job as a librarian and surprisingly, he found love.

Zikri got married at the ripe age of forty and eventually gave birth to a cute baby boy. The couple named him Jazztar as the two agreed that they wanted him to stand out amongst the crowd with his eccentric name. And now, Zikri closed another chapter in his life, but his story met an unfortunate climax.

After the birth of Jazztar, Zikri's wife began to develop rather unusual behaviours. At times she would be sad than happy, angry then laughing, hyperactive then exhausted. It brought fear to Zikri as he had to witness his wife's episodes. It was unfortunate news to Zikri when he found out that his wife suffered from manic depression. It was quite unclear about how she began to be unstable.

But being the patient man he was, he continued to believe until he would find a solution. Unfortunately, it was a little too late as his wife somehow received drugs from an anonymous person. At times she would inject herself and be transported to "heaven". She never felt so alive. All the problems and stress of parenting and family swept away in the clouds. And just across the living room was baby Jazztar, crying away as his mother mopes around the sofa. Zikri came back from the library hoping to be greeted with warmth but that warmth turned into a smouldering fire from hell when his wife began shouting at the poor weeping baby. The father tried his best to calm the baby down as well as his furious wife. And at that moment, he could not hold his patience any longer. He chose the safety and health of his baby and ran away from the house leaving his wife to continue her unreasonable tantrums.

Many years have passed since that incident and Zikri never looked back hoping that his now matured son would never question about his mother. Zikri did his best as a father and continued his son until his special day. Luck and blessing seem to be on their shoulders.

After the two exchange a loving and hopeful conversation, the two finally arrived. The car dealership was just like they hoped for, only it wasn't like any other. The two got out of the car and proceed to enter the gates. The place looked parturient and it had a big sign that said 'Stack's Dealership'. As promised the land was full of cars, old and even older. The land itself was colossal. From the naked eye, it could have been acres of land, possibly more. Unlike Jazztar who began exploring like a kid in a candy store, Zikri was rather baffled.

The store didn't seem like it had an office where customers discuss with shop owners. It was more like a junkyard than a car store. Jazztar wandered off for minutes being surrounded by rust and rubble. He was amazed by the sheer number of cars. As he entered further into the "car store" he noticed that the cars were displayed in a rather peculiar way.

The 'car dealership' began to resemble a junkyard on the inside as the cars were stacked on top of one another and that the cars were parked tightly against each other, side mirror to side mirror. Zikri began to speculate if he was being tricked when he saw the advert online.

Moments later, a well-dressed man approached the two. The two, startled by the man greeted him. The man clarified himself as the owner of the car dealerships. The owner seemed to be an appropriate person to own a car dealership, even if it was an odd-looking one. He mentioned that the stacked cars, the acres of land and the 'amount of rust' is a way to attract customers.

"Being a lonely store in the middle of the countryside, I had to find some way to stand out," he said.

After a few greetings and questions, the three began a proper tour around the place. Jazztar went ahead as he saw most of the inside. The owner was pleased by the enthusiastic interest of the birthday boy. The owner seemed calm and collected. When asked about the place, he proudly answers them. The man said was lucky enough to find a place large enough for his "collection". But it wasn't large enough, so he decided to stack them on top of each other with a thin platform in between them. How he managed to finance such a location as well as stack them in such a way, Zikri was timid to ask.

The trio push in deeper into the shop. The father and son were perplexed by the sheer number of stacked cars. The number of cars seemed to be growing each time they turned their heads. It seemed like finding the dream car was more of a treasure hunt than a simple grab. The minutes felt like hours as the two looked through the stacks to find the car they're looking for. The owner told them that the two "barely scratched the surface".

Zikri and the owner went back to discuss other matters and Jazztar was determined to find "his" car. After walking and walking dragging a stick on the sandy floor and the row of cars, he dropped it at the sight of something eye-catching. A single car that wasn't stacked like the rest and in between a pile of cars. As Jazztar began to approach the car, it revealed itself as an early version of the Proton Saga car. Jazztar examined the car and found details that attracted him like the dark blue exterior.

The inside of the car was also impressive. The seats seemed to be intact and there wasn't a single speck of dust or grease on the dashboard and steering wheel. Jazztar stroked his hand across the seats and felt no dust or dirt. It was quite odd due to the fact that the car was surrounded by dirt and other rusty cars. After peeking around, Jazztar enters the car. He opened the car door and entered the driver's seat. He then placed both his hands on the steering wheel.

At that moment he would alternate between checking the interior of the car for flaws and checking if the coast was clear. After a long walk and hundreds of cars that Jazztar saw, he finally found the car he was looking for. A dark-blue 1988 Proton Saga Aeroback.

Chapter 3

The Beloved Car

Jazztar slowly began smiling from ear to ear. An adventurous future awaited him. But the shining moment was disturbed when he heard a faint voice almost as if someone was whispering in his ear. Jazztar turned his head around and found no one in the backseat. Thinking it was just his imagination, he got out of the car to inform his father and the owner of the car. But just a few steps later, his head abruptly felt dizzy. He tried massaging his forehead trying to regain his awareness. He thought it was just the heat.

However, it was more than just a sudden headache as his surroundings began to flash and change colour. On top of that, he heard a strange voice, a young female's voice. The voice in his head kept saying mysterious sentences. He could clearly understand what this voice was saying but he wanted this torment to stop. Suddenly...everything went dark.

Jazztar slowly opened his eyes and saw Zikri and the owner. After a while, he realized he and the adults were back

at the entrance of the dealership. The two were glad that the boy was awake. When Jazztar told them what happened, they said that they saw Jazztar on the ground next to a Proton Saga. The two worried that he may have suffered from a heatstroke of some sort as his body was sweating and he appeared to be shivering. Zikri and the owner carried Jazztar all the way to the entrance to get help. The nearest hospital, let alone clinic was hours away from where they were. So the two positioned the sick boy near the entrance so he could enter the ambulance faster.

After doing some "check-ups", Jazztar recovered and the owner immediately cancelled the request for the ambulance. After the ordeal, Zikri who was concerned about the health of his only child wanted to stop shopping for the car and continue the search on a later date. The pair had been searching and walking with no results. They spent hours finding one car in what felt like an ocean of junk to Zikri. For someone as patient as Zikri, he too felt a sense of defeat.

But Jazztar remembered something. Jazztar raised his eyebrows and quickly got up upon remembering about the car. After convincing the two adults, the trio went back in the stacks to find the Proton Saga. They arrive and Jazztar straightaway pointed at the car he wanted. The car was still in between two stacks and untouched. Jazztar immediately gave Zikri a tour around the car, showing the paint, seats, and dashboard just like how he saw it the first time. Zikri slowly smiled and the two agreed that was it, the car that they have been looking for and patiently waited for.

The owner who was behind the two arrived and Zikri told him which car they wanted. The owner brushed himself and gave a smart, proper look preparing to talk business. Zikri showed the owner the car. As the owner saw the Proton Saga, he gave an uncanny look as if he noticed something terrible. The owner's voice began to stammer as tried to convince the two to keep searching the store for other cars. Zikri and Jazztar looked at each other in confusion and agree that there was no need for further searching.

The Proton Saga was the car they chose. The owner hesitantly agrees with the two and they head back to sign the papers. The father and son spent the whole day at the dealership and they were ready to head home just in time for dinner. The owner signed a contract for the car to arrive at the pair's house after he had done some minor restorations to the car. The excited birthday boy waited in Zikri's car. Before Zikri exited the dealership, the owner, with a concerned look on his face warned him not to leave the car unintended. He told him to always drive it. Somewhat taking the note into consideration, the two left the dealership. And therefore one chapter of Jazztar as well as Zikri life was closed. And another chapter begins.

A month has passed since the two shopped at the dealership. The two settled nicely at their apartment. It was small, but it had the basic house necessities. Later that day, Jazztar surprised his father with an email. Jazztar was selected to study at the university he wanted. After grasping the situation, the two embraced with joy. Zikri looked into his

son's eyes and at the moment, looked back at all the struggles he went through. Although he still has regrets, he never expected that there were diamonds under dirt and ash. He still believes that belief and belief alone, could bring joy to him and his son. The good news kept pouring in as the car they bought a month ago arrived. The two looked out at their apartment and saw the truck coming in to the parking lot. The two went down and after signing the last pieces of documentation, the car was ready to be unveiled.

The car rolled down the ramp and unexpectedly the car was just the same as it was at the dealership. The two exchanged blank faces and checked the remarks sent by the owner:

Dear Zikri,

My name is Sabri. I am an associate of the owner of Stack's Dealership. I have some unfortunate news. Just a few days after you and your son bought the dark-blue 1988 Proton Saga Aeroback, the owner unexpectedly passed away. But before he died, he tasked me to settle your car's delivery.

The hospital records showed that he died of "unexplained causes". It took five days to find his body as the search team searched the entire dealership. His body was found leaning against the same car you bought. They mentioned that they found no signs of a struggle. And the autopsy confirmed that he didn't die of poisoning. The investigation of the death, as well as the identification of the owner, is still ongoing.

My apologies for delaying your delivery for a month due to the explained circumstances. But as promised your car has arrived and I hope you enjoy it.

From Sabri

Stacks Dealership

Zikri sent deep condolences in his heart. All though he was shocked by this news, there were still so many questions that demanded answers. If the man who wrote the note was an associate of the owner, how come he didn't know who he was? Furthermore, the man wrote the note in such a rushed, unplanned way as if he was trying to brush the delivery of his shoulders. And the other chilling fact is that he died leaning against the car. While trying to solve the questions, Jazztar was already seated in the driver seat and he impatiently turned on the engine. To their amazement, the car sounded beautiful. So beautiful that Zikri forgot what he was thinking. For now, he placed the notes and documentation down his pocket and ordered Jazztar to sit at the passenger's seat as he hasn't received his driver's license.

Zikri entered the car for the first time, he leaned back against the seat, placed both hands on the wheel. He then revs up the engine. He shifts the gears and places his foot on the gas pedal. With high hopes, the two drove the car outside the parking lot and drove it leisurely around the neighbourhood. As they were driving, Zikri told the news of the owner to Jazztar. It was an eye-opener for him and Zikri as two continued to drive around the small, straight roads of the town. After the bitter situation, the two head back home.

The two exited the car feeling proud of what they bought. After the drive, Zikri went back to the apartment while Jazztar stayed back to practice parking the car. Jazztar was at first happy and proud that he had got what he wanted. However, the memory of what happened to him at the dealership as well

as the death of the owner still lingers in his head. The ill-fated moment still lingered in Zikri's head as well. At the table, he repeatedly reads the note over and over trying to understand what was going on. There was too much information for him to bear. There was a weird dealership, with a weird stacked car concept. The owner of the store had no name and died with no reasonable causes. Zikri recalled never mentioning asking the owner his name even though he spent hours with him. It was truly a mystery.

Chapter 4

Unfortunate Loss

As the questions began to pile up, Zikri thought it was best if he tried to learn more about the dealership at the library. During his lunch breaks, he would stay back to find any record of a shop with cars that were stacked on top of each other. Other than circus cars, he couldn't find any leads. He sat down trying to remember anything from that day. He even meditated in the library trying to find answers. He could not recall anything. The name of the owner, the documentation he signed, even how much he purchased the car. He only remembered Jazztar passing out at the dealership and the car Jazztar wanted. Zikri spent days and ran into countless roadblocks trying to enter the rabbit hole. Until an idea came to his mind. He thought it would be best if he retracted his steps and find clues at the dealership.

Zikri told Jazztar that he will be heading out of town for a few days and that he will be taking the Proton Saga. Jazztar, busy preparing for his college and driver test kindly nodded.

For the time being, Zikri and Jazztar's neighbour stayed in his apartment room to accompany Jazztar while Zikri's away. The two were comfortable with Kory as he helped the two move in. Plus, he was about to move out, so he needed a place to stay until his house was ready. And so Jazztar gave a big hug to his father and wished him a safe journey.

During the few days, Jazztar practised hard on his driving test. He failed a lot over the past few months. However, he inherited patience and determination from his father. He tried and tried again until one day he heard "you pass" from his driving instructor. And another moment is sealed in his life. With a driver's licence in his hands, he planned to surprise Zikri when he comes home from "work". He waited while studying for the first exam of his first-ever college semester.

Before going to bed, his phone rang. It was from a hospital. Due to being overworked, he assumed that it was just a wrong call. But upon hearing Zikri's name, his eye became wide. All he heard from the conversation was 'your father passed away'. Before he finished his conversation, he dropped his phone in shock. At that moment he started to shake and breathe rapidly. His legs became weak due to the shock. His eyes and body began trembling and he collapsed on the floor. His vision became hazy and tears started pouring out of his eyes. He couldn't believe that this had happened. Many thoughts came to his mind. His emotions took over his body and for minutes, he stayed crumpled into a ball.

And without realizing it, he woke up and it was already dawn. He saw that the room was messy and his phone was on

the floor still beeping. Jazztar slapped himself a few times thinking that this was all a dream. Unfortunately, it wasn't as the death of Zikri was on the news later in the afternoon. His grandparents mourn by his side after they attend the funeral. Kory and his grandparents accompanied him days later as Jazztar tries to accept reality. Jazztar's grandparents offered him to stay at their house in the East and move on. However, he insists to stay at the apartment to respect his father. The two agreed with his decision and left the next morning.

The poor boy locked himself in his room for three days not talking to his friends and teachers. Kory, on the other hand, chose to stay with Jazztar for a few more days until he was no longer in anguish. He provided him with food and other necessities.

It was almost a week since his father's death and for some odd reason, the news didn't mention where and how he died. They only mention that he died in a car accident without any additional details. It was quite abnormal although news always gets updated within hours after a story is published.

And as time moved on he was getting more and more irritated. He stepped out of the house for the first time and paced back and forth around the neighbourhood. As he was doing this he kept hearing things. He heard noises like dogs barking, wind blowing and water rushing. Noises that he shouldn't be hearing. Rather than being peaceful sounding, it felt like agony to Jazztar. There were no nice thoughts in his mind, only hurt.