

Middle of July

A series



Synopsis

For Luna and Star, growing up without fathers was their shared reality. But on July 16th that year, a man walked into Luna's life, claiming to be her father. As secrets unravel, their friendship—and everything they believed about family—hangs in the balance

VI

Mummy Moon's POV

November 1991

I had an accident in my second trimester that landed me in the hospital.

It wasn't serious—or at least, that's what the nurses kept telling me.

But as I sat in the hospital, staring at the blood staining my dress, all I could think was, I've lost my baby.

It happened so fast. One moment, I was crossing the road, lost in thought. The next, a car screeched too late. A dull thud, a sharp pain in my side, and I was on the ground. The driver panicked, helping me up, apologizing over and over, but I barely heard him.

The only thing I noticed was the warmth trickling down my legs.

At the hospital, I clutched my stomach, bracing for the worst. The doctor examined me, his hands firm but gentle as he pressed against my abdomen. Then he brought out a small device, placing it on my belly, adjusting it until a faint, rhythmic whoosh-whoosh filled the silence.

Relief softened his face. "Miss Julianna, your babies are just fine."

My breath caught. "Babies?"

He glanced at me, surprised. "You didn't know? You're carrying twins."

The room spun. Darkness.

When I woke up, I was in another bed. A nurse hovered nearby. "You fainted," she said. "The doctor will be in soon."

He arrived not long after, his expression unreadable. "Miss Julianna, you passed out after hearing the news. Are you all right?"

I wasn't. I stared at him, my pulse still unsteady. "Are you sure?"

He nodded. "Your belly is measuring larger than expected for one baby, and I can hear two heartbeats. Strong and healthy."

I should have been happy. But all I felt was fear.

I was barely surviving. How could I raise two children?

My aunt had three little ones of her own, the oldest just eight. She and her husband worked themselves to the bone just to feed them. How could they take care of me? Of us? I couldn't even afford to tell her about this accident.

I clenched my fists. If she hadn't waited ten long years for children, maybe hers would have been old enough to help. But life had never been fair to me. Why should it start now?

The doctor noticed my distress. He encouraged me to talk, but his kindness felt too personal. A hand on my arm that lingered too long. A soft, knowing smile. I glanced at his ring. Married.

I needed to leave.

"When can I go home?" I asked.

"As soon as the IV finishes. We'll check your blood pressure again." He handed me a piece of paper. "Call me if you need anything."

Did doctors even do that?

The trip home was a blur. My mind circled the same thought: Twins. How?

I cursed Kasim. He had done this to me.

I scraped together what little money I had to attend antenatal visits, but it was clear—I had no means to raise two children. I could barely take care of myself.

On one of my antenatal visits, the doctor made a suggestion. One that sent ice through my veins.

"Adoption."

I stared at him, stunned.

He showed me profiles of young, eager couples who longed for a baby. Couples who could give my babies the life I never could.

"If you truly love them, you'll do what's best for them," he said.

I didn't even need to think about it.

"No."

Never.

But love wasn't enough. I wasn't eating well. I wasn't healthy. My babies weren't getting the nutrients they needed.

Late in the pregnancy, few days to my expected delivery date, I managed to go for the final antenatal visit.

Everything was fine until the doctor couldn't find one of the twin's heartbeats.

Panic gripped me as he moved the probe across my belly, searching. "Let me check again," he murmured. But I could tell—he already knew.

One of my babies was gone.

I felt the moment my spirit broke. My hands, my legs—everything went numb. The doctor said something about an emergency C-section, about scheduling it for the next morning. But I wasn't listening.

I had failed my babies, even before bringing them into this world.

That afternoon, I signed the adoption papers.

I told myself it was the right thing to do. The only thing to do.

On the ride home, silent tears slipped down my cheeks. I would explain to my aunt. She was a mother—she would understand. She had to.

Wouldn't she?

I wasn't sure.

But on the night of the delivery, the impossible happened.

The baby they thought was gone... was alive.

I gave birth to two healthy baby girls, and for the first time in a long while, I felt hope.

But it was short-lived.

The contract was still in place. I wanted to keep them both, but I couldn't. To break the agreement, I needed to pay a fine—compensation for the family's emotional and financial investment. Money I didn't have.

I begged the doctor to help. But even his generosity had limits.

I wept bitterly.

In the end, I surrendered my baby, Star.

At least I had one left, I told myself. But it wasn't the same.

I didn't know then, that Star never made it to the loving couple I had seen in the doctor's office. She was somewhere else. With someone else.

And seven years later, our paths would cross again.

Present Day

Madam Roseline wasn't picking my calls. She wasn't even home. It was as if she had just vanished.

I had truly destroyed everything.

I could never forget the day I saw the Polaroid of Star as a newborn, tucked inside Madam Roseline's little photo album—the very one the doctor had suggested I give to the young couple who were meant to adopt her, as a token of love and support.

I had been in shock. Star was my lost daughter?

How?

Madam Roseline had told me her husband died when she was pregnant.

Had she lied?

I didn't know for sure, but I chose to keep my discovery a secret. As painful as it was, what could I even say to her? I had carried the shame and guilt of my choice for sixteen years. I knew the weight of regret. I was no stranger to the ache of loss.

I was secretly grateful to the doctor for making them keep the name I had given her at birth. It was enough to have Star close.

I had signed the contract. I had given up on her before she was even born. What right did I have to claim her now?

But Kasim had shown up unexpectedly and I became afraid. Who knew what he would do next? I wanted to tell the whole truth that Sunday afternoon. I couldn't hide it any longer. They were older now and I owed them both that much.

That day, I had been nostalgic, flipping through my old album. I found the hidden picture and let myself imagine a different life. A peaceful one.. A happy one. With both my daughters. With a loving man by my side.
But I was careless.

I didn't return the picture to its hiding place.
Star found it.
Oh God, she did.

I had to watch her break, her face twisting with hurt and betrayal.

I had no words. None.
One by one, everyone left.
I was alone.

I couldn't blame them. They had no idea about the endless tears, the pain I carried every single day, the weight of regret.

They didn't know how hard I fought to keep going—if not for anything else, for the one child I could still call my own.

Luna told me she needed time, and I was giving it to her, as hard as it was.

I remembered when Luna taught me how to use the voice note feature on WhatsApp. With shaking hands, I had managed to send voice notes to Madam Roseline—hoping, praying she would see them. Days passed. Nothing. Just silence.

Until one night, a knock came at my door.
Madam Roseline stood there, tears streaking down her face.

“Star won’t even look at me,” she whispered. “She turns her back to the wall and just... cries. She won’t eat. Won’t talk. Not even to Luna. I don’t know what to do.”

I felt pity for her. For myself.

That night, she told me her story. How she got pregnant at twenty. How her powerful father had forced her to abort the baby. How she lost her womb in the process. How, years later, she stole money from her father, just to adopt a child—just to feel whole again. Just to fill the void of what had been.

Tears slid down her face. “I know she’s angry,” she said. “I know I should have told her. But Luna is like a sister to her. So why is she hurting like this?” She exhaled shakily. “I’m thinking of contacting her boyfriend.”

Her what?

“Don’t judge me,” she muttered. “You know how Star is. She thinks I don’t know she’s seeing someone. I’ve been waiting for her to open up to me, but I can’t wait any longer. Not when things are this bad.”

I reached for her hand, squeezing gently. “We’ll figure it out,” I said.

She looked up at me, eyes glistening. “You’re not angry?”

I shook my head. “How could I be? You’ve always been there for us. And I know you love her.” Her shoulders sagged with relief. “I do,” she whispered. “I just want her to be okay.”

I nodded, swallowing the lump in my throat. “Me too.”

A heavy silence settled between us, but it wasn’t uncomfortable. It was understanding. We weren’t just two women carrying a secret anymore. We were two mothers trying to hold on to the child we both loved.

She cleared her throat. “I begged Luna to tell me his name and found a way to get the number from Star’s phone. I’m under a sworn oath not to let Star know it came from her.”

“What’s his name?” I asked.

“Jude. I’ll call him now and put it on speaker.”

The phone rang. Once. Twice.

Then, he answered.

“Hello?”

The voice.

I stiffened.

“Who’s this?” he asked.

Madam Roseline spoke first. "This is Star's mother. Are you Jude's father? I'd like to speak with him, please."

A brief pause. Then—

"Jude has gone to bed, but..."

No.

It couldn't be.

The voice. The tone.

A wave of nausea hit me.

I barely heard the rest of the conversation. My pulse roared in my ears, drowning out every sound.

The call didn't last long.

I forced the horrible thought out of my head. It was impossible. A mistake. A trick of the mind.

"Let me see the number," I whispered, my hands trembling.

She turned the phone towards me

And the moment my eyes landed on the screen, my world split apart.

After she left, I called Kasim immediately.

"We need to talk. Now" I said.

No pleasantries. No hesitation.

I waited behind my store, arms crossed, nerves fraying with every passing second. The dim glow from the security light cast long shadows against the brick wall. The night air was thick, humid, wrapping around me like a second skin.

Then, footsteps.

I turned as he stepped into the light.

"Why are you dating a 22-year-old girl, David?" My voice was sharp, but my hands clenched into fists to stop them from shaking.

He blinked at me, expression blank. "I don't know wha—"

"Oh, please don't play dumb with me." My voice wavered, but I pushed through. I had been in a state of shock since I saw the number, but now, fury was breaking through the numbness.

My life had always been a rollercoaster, but this? This was beyond anything I had ever faced.

I took a steadying breath. “David, she’s your biological daughter.”

Silence.

His face didn’t change. Not even a flicker of surprise.

I swallowed. “I never told you, but I actually had twins. It’s a long story, but—”

Before I could finish, his hand shot out, clamping around my wrist. With a sharp tug, he pulled me deeper into the shadows behind the store, away from the faint hum of the street. The scent of dust and stale oil from the generator filled the air.

“Let go of me,” I hissed, wrenching my arm free. My heartbeat pounded against my ribs. “How could you date a 22-year-old? You’re forty-five!”

He tilted his head, a slow smirk creeping onto his face. “Are you jealous because I’ve been having my own little fun?” I don’t think I’m ready to let go just yet.

My blood turned to ice.

This wasn’t the reaction of a man realizing he had been dating his own child. This was the reaction of a man who already knew.

A laugh—soft, almost amused—escaped him. “You never wondered why my own family cast me out?” He shook his head. “I fed you that story about being born Muslim, and you—and everyone in that damned church—believed it.”

My breath hitched.

He stepped closer, his voice lowering to something almost gentle.

“You see,” he murmured, “some men spend their lives searching for lost things. A dream, a purpose... a missing piece of themselves.” His smirk deepened. “Me? I simply reached into the past and reclaimed what was already mine.”

The world tilted beneath me.

“You knew,” I whispered. “You knew.”

His eyes gleamed in the dim light.

“I found out six years ago. The day we met at the hospital,” he continued, his voice smooth, measured. “Luna’s so-called best friend was something more. Something precious. And from that moment, I knew—I wouldn’t let the past repeat itself.”

My pulse pounded so hard I could barely hear.

"Repeat itself?" I echoed, the words tasting like acid.

He sighed, as if the answer was obvious. "History has a cruel way of taking things from me. But I don't make the same mistake twice." He tilted his head, watching my reaction. "This time, I held on."

A strangled sound tore from my throat.

She trusted too easily. That was the thing about abandoned daughters. They were always looking for something to fill the void. And I—I had been waiting.

I stumbled back, bile rising in my throat.

"I'll never let you see them again," I spat. My voice shook, but my rage burned hotter than my fear. "Even if it means killing you myself!"

His smirk faded. "You might want to contact Luna before doing anything stupid."

I fumbled for my phone, my hands trembling so badly I almost dropped it. I had to warn her. I had to—

He reached out fast snatching the phone from my hands. His face darkened.

"Not so fast sweetheart," he said, voice chillingly smooth, "First, let's make another deal, shall we?"

Tears blurred my vision as I struggled to get the phone back.

Kasim just watched, smiling, taking pleasure in my desperation.

And in that moment, with gut-wrenching clarity, I realized—

My biggest mistake had been falling in love with this monster twenty years ago.