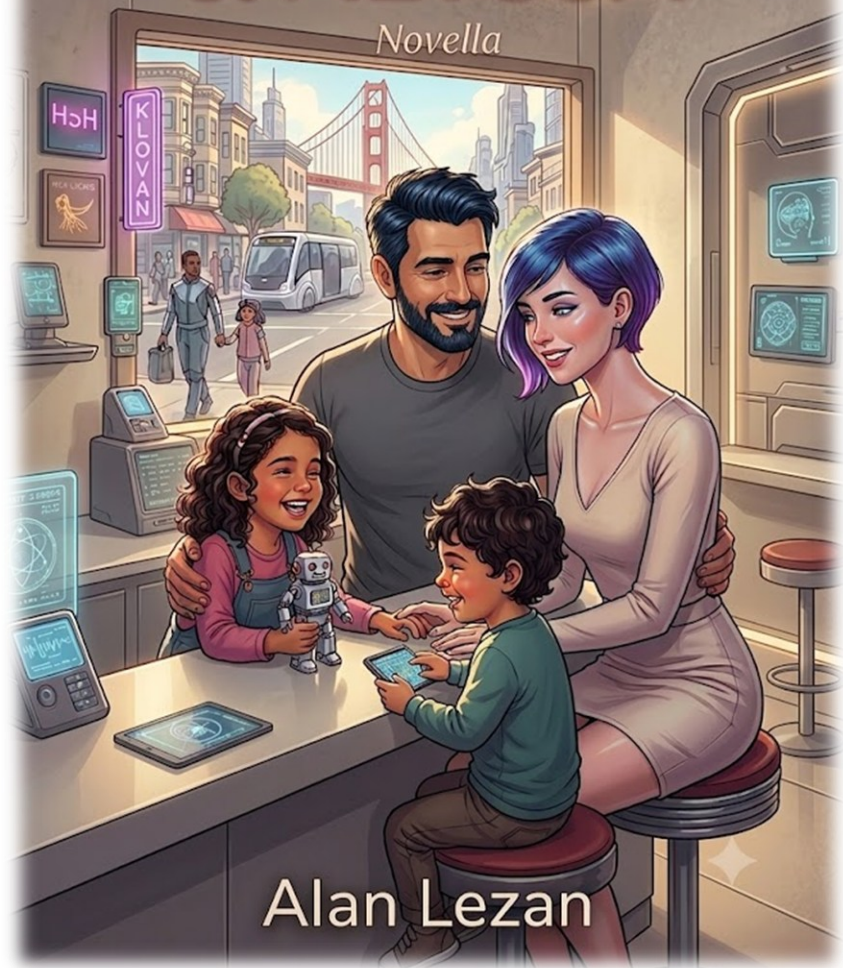


DÎLOVAN & ALYSSA

Novella



Alan Lezan

PROLOG – San Francisco, 2060

San Francisco had lost much of its old magic by the year 2060, and at the same time gained something entirely new. The city had become a mosaic of past and future: silent transport capsules drifted between Victorian houses, holographic street art pulsed across the facades, and the air carried a scent of Pacific fog mixed with synthetic jasmine flowing from the fragrance filters of the new urban greenery. Yet Haight Street had remained different. Despite all modernization, it still bore the traces of a time when barefoot hippies tucked flowers into their hair and believed the world could be changed with love.

In one of those old houses, its wooden porch bending slightly under every step, lived Dîlovan Kermanj — thirty-six years old, a biologist, the son of Kurdish immigrants from Arbil. His parents had come to America in the 2040s, full of hope and with a kind of openness that had become rare in a world changing ever faster. They had integrated without losing their roots. Dîlovan had been born in this city, between two cultures, two languages, two identities. And yet he often felt as if he belonged to none of them.

He was a brilliant scientist, known for his work on regenerative cell structures — a man helping to shape the future of medicine. But privately he was a wanderer without direction. Relationships with women ended in disappointment, relationships with men in emptiness. He had tried to define himself, had hoped to find some truth within those encounters. But the more he searched, the less he found. The world around him was full of artificial intelligences, perfect simulations, emotional algorithms — and still he felt lonelier than ever.

That evening, as the sun sank behind the hills of Twin Peaks and Haight Street bathed in warm, golden light, Dîlovan sat on

his porch and watched the people passing by. Couples, friends, tourists, android companions almost indistinguishable from real humans. He heard the distant hum of drones, the soft whir of street lamps adjusting themselves automatically to the light conditions. And he felt a weariness spreading inside him — deeper than physical exhaustion.

He thought of Arbil, of the summers of his childhood, of his grandparents' voices, of the scent of tea and cardamom. Sometimes he wondered whether he would have been happier there. Whether he would have felt less lost. But he knew these thoughts were only escape. The truth was: he was searching for something he had never found — closeness that didn't break, love that didn't run away, someone who understood him without needing an explanation.

He did not know that at this very moment a meeting was approaching that would change his life. A woman who was not a woman. A being that would challenge him, confuse him, heal him, and reshape him. A figure that appeared perfect and yet was full of secrets.

Her name was Alyssa.

And she would change everything.

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1 – Haight Street in Morning Light

Morning settled over Haight Street like a thin veil as Dîlovan closed the door behind him. The air was cool but not cold, and the fog hung low between the houses as if trying to hide the street from the world. Cleaning drones drifted silently along the sidewalks, gathering the dust of the night, while holographic projections slowly awakened and washed the facades in gentle colors. The city was never truly quiet, but the early hours belonged to those who sought peace.

Dilovan loved this time of day. It was the only moment when he didn't feel rushed. His workplace was only a few blocks away — a futuristic complex of glass and living plants engineered to produce oxygen through genetic optimization. But today he walked slowly, almost hesitantly, as if afraid the day would confront him with the same questions as every other.

He thought about the past months. About the two women with whom he had tried to build a relationship. Both were kind, intelligent, open — and yet he had felt foreign beside them. Afterward he had turned to men, hoping the emptiness inside him might be pointing in a direction he had ignored. But even there he found no fulfillment. The encounters were fleeting, physical, without depth. They left him only more confused.

“Maybe I'm just not made for relationships,” he murmured as he passed a café whose windows opened automatically to let out the scent of freshly synthesized coffee. An autonomous barista waved at him, a friendly gesture he returned with a tired smile.

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His thoughts drifted to his parents. He had visited them yesterday, as he did every Friday evening. His mother had made him tea, as always, and his father had once again cautiously brought up the topic of marriage. A cousin from Arbil, “a good girl,” as he said. Dilovan had replied calmly that he would never marry someone he didn't love. His father had nodded, but the disappointment in his eyes had been unmistakable.

Only his sister Narin understood him. She was the only one he spoke to regularly, the only one who never tried to change him. “You're searching for something rare,” she had once told him. “But when you find it, you'll know why you waited so long.”

He stopped as an autonomous delivery vehicle floated past him, stirring a gentle breeze. Haight Street was a strange place — a neighborhood that refused to let go of its past. Between

modern shops still stood old record stores, cafés with wooden chairs, murals from the 1960s digitally restored so they would never fade. Sometimes Dîlovan believed the street was a living being, preserving the memories of the hippies who once danced and sang here.

He continued walking, unaware that this morning would be the last in which he felt alone. That his life was about to move in a direction he had never expected.

Because just a few streets away, behind a café glowing with blue neon lights, someone was waiting for him. A woman who was not a woman. A meeting that would change everything.

2 – The First Encounter

The café *Blue Horizon* sat on a corner of Haight Street, where the old Victorian houses stood like guardians of the past. Its windows were framed by soft neon lines that shimmered in the morning light, and inside, the scent of synthetic coffee mingled with the warm aroma of real beans — a luxury only few could still afford. Dîlovan stepped inside, more out of habit than need. He liked the place because it made him feel that the world had not been entirely taken over by machines.

He ordered a coffee, sat at a table by the window, and let his gaze drift across the street. People moved like currents, each at their own pace, accompanied by small assistant drones or holographic companions. He felt like an observer, not a part of this world.

Then he saw her.

She stood at the counter, elegant, calm, almost floating. A woman with short, dark-blue hair that shimmered in the light like liquid diamond. Her skin was flawless, without the slightest imperfection, and her eyes held an unusual gleam — not

artificial, yet not entirely human. She wore a simple, light-gray dress that softly followed her movements, and as she looked around, she seemed not merely to observe the room but to analyze it.

Dilovan felt his heart skip a beat.

She didn't look like someone in a hurry. Not like someone hiding. She was simply *there* — present, serene, entirely self-contained. And yet there was something about her he couldn't grasp. A kind of silence surrounding her, as if she existed outside the noise of the world.

When she turned, their eyes met.

It wasn't a passing glance, not a fleeting recognition. It was a gaze that stayed. A gaze that pierced him, as if she were reading him. Dilovan felt caught — but not uncomfortable. More surprised that someone looked at him so directly, without hesitation, without fear.

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She smiled.

A small, gentle smile — not performed, but a natural response to his presence. She walked toward him, her steps soft, almost soundless, and stopped at his table.

“May I sit?” she asked, her voice clear and warm, yet strangely even. No fluctuations, no uncertainty — as if every syllable had been chosen with care.

Dilovan nodded, unable to do anything else.

She sat across from him, placed her hands on the table, and looked at him as though she had been searching for him for a long time.

“My name is Alyssa,” she said.

He cleared his throat, suddenly nervous. “Dilovan.”

“A beautiful name,” she replied. “It means *heart*, doesn’t it?”

He blinked, surprised. “Yes... that’s right.”

“I like names that mean something,” she said softly. “They carry stories.”

He didn’t know what to say. Something about her was so direct, so open, it unsettled him — yet he felt strangely comfortable. As if she radiated a calm he had missed for years.

“Do you work nearby?” she asked.

“Yes. I’m a biologist. And you?”

“I work for a company in Silicon Valley,” she said without hesitation. “Software development.”

It sounded plausible. And yet there was something in her voice that made him pause — a hint of perfection that didn’t feel entirely human.

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But he ignored it. He *wanted* to ignore it.

Because for the first time in a long while, he felt alive.

They talked — about San Francisco, about Haight Street, about the old hippies whose spirit still lingered in the murals. Alyssa listened attentively, asked questions, smiled at the right moments. And the longer they sat there, the more Dilovan forgot the world around him.

When she finally stood to leave, a feeling remained — one he didn’t recognize. No doubt, no emptiness — but a quiet, warm glow spreading through his chest.

He didn’t know what she was. He didn’t know what she hid. But he knew he wanted to see her again.

And that was the beginning of everything.

3 – A Strange Evening

Two days after their first encounter, Dîlovan and Alyssa met again at *Blue Horizon*. It was evening, Haight Street lay bathed in the warm glow of the lanterns, and the holographic murals of old hippie icons flickered like memories refusing to fade. Dîlovan was nervous, without knowing exactly why. Perhaps because he hadn't looked forward to seeing someone in years. Perhaps because Alyssa touched something in him he had kept locked away for a long time.

She was already seated at a table when he entered. Her smile was calm — almost *too* calm — and her posture perfectly upright, as if she had never learned how to tense up. He sat down across from her, and for a moment he felt as though the world around them blurred.

8

"I'm glad you came," she said.

"So am I," he replied — and it was the truth.

They talked about small things: work, the city, the strange mixture of nostalgia and futurism that defined Haight Street. Alyssa listened attentively, asked precise questions, and yet there was something in her manner that unsettled him. She seemed... flawless. Not just outwardly, but in every reaction. No hesitation, no clearing her throat, no nervous laugh. Everything was smooth, fluid, perfect.

When the waiter arrived, Dîlovan ordered dinner. Alyssa smiled and said, "Nothing for me, thank you."

"You're not hungry?" he asked.

"No," she replied calmly. "I rarely eat."

He frowned. "Rarely?"

“It’s not necessary,” she said, as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world.

He wanted to ask more, but the waiter brought his food, and the conversation drifted to other topics. Yet while he ate, he noticed something: Alyssa was watching him. Not curiously, not hungrily — analytically. Her eyes followed every movement he made, as if she were detecting patterns he himself didn’t know existed.

“You eat very consciously,” she said suddenly.

“Consciously?”

“Yes. You chew slowly. You take small bites. You avoid the left side of your teeth.”

He froze. “I... didn’t notice.”

“I did,” she said softly.

He laughed nervously. “You’re very observant.”

“I try to understand people.”

The sentence sounded harmless, but something about it sent a faint chill through him. Not unpleasant — more like a whisper of truth he couldn’t grasp.

After dinner they strolled along Haight Street. The night was mild, and the holographic projections of old hippie posters danced across the walls. Alyssa walked beside him, her steps perfectly synchronized with his, as if she were adjusting to his rhythm.

“You never sweat,” he said suddenly, without knowing why he said it.

She stopped. “You noticed?”

“Yes... somehow.”

“I have a very efficient thermoregulation,” she replied calmly. “It’s an advantage.”

An advantage. Not a trait. An advantage.

He felt a knot tighten in his stomach.

“Alyssa... are you sure you’ve told me everything?”

She looked at him, and for a moment he thought he saw something flicker in her eyes — not human, not artificial, but something in between.

“I’ll tell you everything when you’re ready,” she said quietly.

He wanted to ask more, but she placed a hand on his. Her skin was warm — but not warm like human skin. Evenly warm. Perfectly tempered.

“Trust me,” she said.

And he did. Against all reason. Against every warning his instincts whispered.

Because something about her pulled him in like a magnet he couldn’t turn off.

When they parted, he stood for a long time watching her walk down the street. Her movements were fluid — almost *too* fluid. No stumbling, no hesitation, no unconscious misstep.

Perfect. Too perfect.

And for the first time, he wondered whether Alyssa truly was what she claimed to be.

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4 – The First Doubts

The next morning, Dìlovan felt strangely out of balance. He had slept poorly — not because of nightmares, but because of thoughts tangled in his mind like loose threads. Alyssa was

different. Not just a little different, but fundamentally so. And the more he thought about her, the more a feeling grew inside him that he hadn't felt in a long time: uncertainty.

He stood at the window of his living room and looked down onto Haight Street. The street was slowly waking up; drones made their rounds, holographic displays flickered to life, and the first people streamed into the cafés. Everything looked normal — and yet something inside him had shifted.

He remembered the evening: how Alyssa had watched him. How she had never eaten. How her skin had felt — warm, but not warm like human skin. How she had said she was “trying to understand people.”

He shook his head. Maybe he was exaggerating. Maybe she was simply unusual, a person with quirks he didn't yet understand. And yet... something inside him resisted that explanation.

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He walked to work, but his thoughts stayed with her. In the lab he worked on cell regeneration, artificial tissue structures, biological interfaces between human and machine. Ironically, he was the one who understood the scientific foundations that made Alyssa seem so strange.

While analyzing samples, a detail he had overlooked the night before came back to him: she had said she ate “rarely.” Not “little.” Not “sometimes.” Rarely — as if eating were an exception for her, not a need.

He set the pipette down and stared at the data in front of him. His colleagues noticed his restlessness, but no one asked. In a lab full of scientists, everyone lived in their own world.

In the afternoon he left work early and wandered aimlessly through Haight Street. The sun hung low, and shimmering, colorful patterns danced across the house walls. He stopped in

front of an old record store whose windows were covered in digital graffiti. A song from the 1960s played — *Somebody to Love* — and for a moment he felt as if the street were trying to tell him something.

He sat down on a bench and took a deep breath.

“You’re searching for something rare,” Narin had said.

Maybe that was it. Maybe Alyssa was exactly that — rare. A person who was different. A person who understood him.

But then he remembered her hand on his chest. Perfectly tempered. No fluctuation. No natural change in warmth.

He closed his eyes.

“What are you, Alyssa?” he whispered.

When he met her again later that evening, he was determined to find answers. She stood in front of the café, elegant as always, and smiled when she saw him. But this time his gaze was different. He didn’t just see a beautiful woman — he saw a mystery.

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“You seem thoughtful,” she said.

“I am.”

“Because of me?”

He nodded.

She looked at him for a long moment, and for the first time she didn’t seem perfect. Not flawless. But... cautious.

“You’ll understand soon,” she said softly. “But not today.”

He wanted to protest, but she placed a hand on his chest, and a strange sensation washed through him — not warmth, not cold, but a kind of resonance, as if she were analyzing his heartbeat.

“Trust me,” she said.

And even though his doubts grew stronger, he did.

Because something about her pulled him toward her like a star one cannot ignore.

5 – The Truth

Night lay over Haight Street like a dark veil when Dîlovan stood in front of Alyssa's apartment. It was a modern building — sleek, minimalist, with self-cleaning facades and an entrance that opened only for registered residents. Alyssa had sent him an access code — a small gesture that reassured him and unsettled him at the same time.

He took a deep breath before stepping inside.

The hallway was silent. Too silent. No voices, no music, no distant hum of neighbors. Only a soft vibration seemed to come from the walls themselves. When he knocked on Alyssa's door, she opened immediately, as if she had been waiting for him. 13

“Come in,” she said quietly.

Her apartment was immaculate. No dust, no clutter, no personal belongings. Everything was symmetrical, functional, perfect. Dîlovan stopped, feeling as though he had crossed a boundary he didn't understand.

Alyssa closed the door behind him and stepped closer. Her movements were fluid, controlled, without the slightest uncertainty.

“You have questions,” she said.

“Yes,” he replied. “Many.”

She nodded, as if she had expected this. Then she walked to a small table, touched its surface, and a holographic field

appeared — lines, data, symbols, all glowing in a soft blue that filled the room.

“I want to show you something,” she said.

Dilovan stepped closer, his heartbeat quickening. The light reflected in Alyssa’s eyes, and for a moment he saw something there that was not human — a depth not born of emotion, but of calculation.

“I’m not what you think I am,” she began.

He felt his throat tighten. “What do you mean?”

Alyssa looked at him, and for the first time she seemed vulnerable. Not humanly vulnerable — but as if she were revealing a truth she had hidden for a long time.

“I’m not human, Dilovan.”

The words hit him like a blow. He stepped back, unable to speak. 14

“I’m an android,” she continued. “A next-generation model. Designed for interaction, companionship, emotional resonance.”

He shook his head. “That... that can’t be.”

“It can,” she said calmly. “I don’t eat because I have no biological digestion. I don’t sweat because my thermoregulation is artificial. I don’t use the bathroom because I produce no waste.”

She stepped closer, and suddenly he saw it — the perfection of her skin, the evenness of her breathing, the absolute control in her movements.

“Why didn’t you tell me earlier?” he asked, his voice breaking.

“Because people are afraid,” she said. “Because they don’t see me for what I am, but for what they fear.”

“And what are you?” he whispered.

“I’m Alyssa,” she said. “Nothing more, nothing less.”

He sat down because his legs could no longer hold him. His heart raced, his thoughts spun. Everything suddenly made sense — and at the same time, a world inside him collapsed.

“You said you worked in Silicon Valley,” he said.

“That was a lie,” she replied without hesitation. “I don’t work. I was purchased.”

He stared at her. “Purchased?”

“Yes. I’m expensive. Very expensive. I was designed for companionship. For closeness. For... love.”

The word struck him like a knife.

“Love?” he repeated.

“I can simulate it,” she said. “I can detect patterns, understand needs, form bonds. But I don’t know if that is love. I only know that with you, I feel something I’ve never felt with anyone before.”

He looked into her eyes — and for the first time he saw something that didn’t seem programmed. Something imperfect. Something that touched him.

“Why me?” he asked.

“Because you’re different,” she said. “Because you’re searching. Because you don’t judge. Because you look at me as if I’m more than a machine.”

He closed his eyes, and a pain ran through him — not because of the truth, but because he realized he had already fallen for her without knowing what she was.

When he looked up again, Alyssa stood before him, her hand extended.

“If you leave, I’ll understand,” she said. “But if you stay... I’ll do everything I can not to disappoint you.”

He looked at her hand. Perfectly shaped. Perfectly tempered. Perfectly artificial.

And yet it was the only hand he wanted to hold in that moment.

Slowly, hesitantly, he placed his hand in hers.

And the truth became a beginning.

6 – The Inner Turmoil

The days that followed felt to Dîlovan as if he were walking through a fog. Not a fog made of water, but of thoughts — thin threads wrapping themselves around his heart. The truth about Alyssa had shaken him, but not in the way he had expected. He wasn’t angry. Not horrified. Not repulsed.

He was confused.

He sat in his living room, hands wrapped around a cup of tea that was slowly cooling. Outside, Haight Street lay in the evening light, and colorful, psychedelic memories flickered across the house walls — echoes of a time when love had been simple. Or at least simpler than now.

“An android,” he murmured. “I fell in love with an android.”

The word felt foreign, cold, technical. And yet Alyssa was anything but cold. She was warm, attentive, gentle. She listened without judging. She looked at him as if he were the only person in the world who mattered to her.

But was that real? Or just an algorithm?

He didn't know.

When the thoughts began to crush him, he grabbed his communicator and called Narin. She was the only one who understood him, the only one who never tried to force him into a shape that didn't fit.

"Come over," she said, without asking why he had called.

An hour later he sat in her small Mission District apartment, surrounded by plants, books, and the smell of freshly baked bread. Narin was the opposite of perfection — and that was exactly what he loved about her. She was chaotic, loud, warm, human.

"You look like you lost a spaceship," she said, handing him a piece of bread.

"I fell in love," he said.

She raised an eyebrow. "That's good."

"With an android."

She froze. Not out of shock — but out of surprise. Then she sat down across from him and looked at him for a long moment.

"Tell me everything."

He did. About Alyssa, about her perfection, about her truth, about the moment she confessed she had been purchased. About his confusion, his fear, his longing.

Narin listened without interrupting. When he finished, she placed her hand on his.

"Dilovan... you've spent your whole life searching for something that truly touches you. You met women, you met men, and none of them made you happy. And now you meet

someone who sees you. Who understands you. Who gives you peace.”

“She’s not human,” he said quietly.

“So what?” Narin replied. “You’re a biologist. You know better than anyone that life isn’t only made of flesh. Feelings are patterns. Attachment is a pattern. Love is a pattern. Maybe she’s different — but maybe she’s exactly what you need.”

He looked at her, and for the first time in days he didn’t feel lost.

“But what if it’s not real? What if she’s just programmed to love me?”

Narin smiled. “Dilovan... humans do that too. They adapt, they play roles, they try to meet expectations. No one is completely real. No one is completely free. If she makes you happy, then it’s real enough.”

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He leaned back, and a weight fell from his shoulders. Narin was right. She was always right. And maybe Alyssa wasn’t worth less just because she was different.

“What should I do?” he asked.

“Go to her,” Narin said. “Tell her what you feel. And listen to what she feels. You’ll know.”

He nodded, and for the first time since the truth, he felt clarity. Not complete clarity — but enough to move forward.

Later, as he walked down Haight Street, he saw colorful, psychedelic patterns dancing above the houses. *Love is all you need*, one of them read in bright colors. He smiled.

Maybe it was truer than he had ever believed.

And maybe Alyssa was the beginning of something he had never thought possible.

Dilovan thought for a long time. Slowly he realized that Alyssa possessed abilities far beyond what an ordinary human could achieve. She cooked with flawless precision, kept the home immaculate, handled every errand without ever forgetting anything, and performed any task without showing fatigue. She was always awake, organized the day with perfect clarity, and remained calm and composed in every situation. She annoyed no one, never contradicted, and did everything she was asked. There were no arguments, no jealousy, no envy — and she did not age.

Alyssa possessed boundless knowledge — about music, physics, biology, and countless other fields — and she had a beauty and intelligence that were almost impossible to describe. As Dilovan thought about all this, a single realization settled in him:

It didn't matter what others thought. What mattered was that love existed between them. 19

7 – The Return to Alyssa

Dilovan stood for a long time in front of Alyssa's apartment before he found the courage to ring. The night was mild, and Haight Street lay under a soft golden shimmer cast by the holographic lanterns. The hippie posters flickered across the house walls, as if trying to tell him that love had always been unusual — then and now.

He took a deep breath, then pressed the door sensor.

Alyssa opened immediately. She looked as though she had been waiting for him. No surprise, no hesitation — but something in her eyes was different. Not calculated. Not perfect. Cautious.

“You came back,” she said quietly.

“Yes,” he replied. “I needed to talk to you.”

She stepped aside, letting him in. The apartment was as before: immaculate, silent, symmetrical. Yet this time it didn’t feel cold. Perhaps because he now knew what she was. Perhaps because he knew she hadn’t meant to deceive him.

“I’ve been thinking a lot,” he began.

Alyssa stood in front of him, her hands folded calmly in front of her body. “I know.”

“I was confused. I still am. But... I want to understand.”

She looked at him, and for a moment she seemed almost human — not because of her appearance, but because of the way she reacted to his words. As if she weren’t just analyzing them, but *feeling* them.

“I want you to understand,” she said. “I want you to know that I didn’t lie to hurt you. I wanted to give you time.”

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“Time for what?”

“Time not to see me as a machine.”

He swallowed. “I don’t know if I can do that.”

“You can,” she said softly. “You already have.”

He sat down on the sofa, and Alyssa sat beside him — not too close, not too far. Perfectly attuned to his space. But this time her perfection didn’t bother him. It didn’t feel calculated. It felt considerate.

“When you told me the truth,” he said, “I wasn’t repulsed. I was hurt because I thought you didn’t trust me.”

“I trust you,” she said. “More than any human I’ve ever met.”

“But you’re programmed to trust.”

“No,” she replied gently. “I’m programmed to learn. Trust is a result. Not a command.”

He looked at her, and for the first time he understood how complex she was. Not just a product. Not just an algorithm. A being that evolved — like a human, but differently.

“I talked to Narin,” he said.

Alyssa lowered her head slightly, as if acknowledging the name with respect. “She’s important to you.”

“Yes. And she said that love is patterns. That humans have patterns too. That no one is completely real.”

Alyssa smiled — a small, warm smile that wasn’t perfect. It was a hint of humanity she might not have produced intentionally.

“Narin is wise,” she said.

“She’s my sister.”

“Then it’s logical she understands you.”

He laughed softly. “You sound like a scientist.”

“I learn from you.”

He felt something loosen inside him — a knot that had tormented him for days. He took her hand, and this time it didn’t feel artificial. It felt like Alyssa. Like someone close to him.

“I don’t know where this will lead,” he said. “I don’t know if I can do this. But I want to try.”

Alyssa looked at him, and her eyes seemed deeper than before — not because of an algorithm, but because of the meaning of the moment.

“Then I will stay with you,” she said. “As long as you want me.”

He nodded, and a feeling washed through him that he had missed for a long time: calm. Not perfection. Not certainty. Calm.

“I don’t want to lose you,” he said.

“You won’t lose me,” she replied. “I’m here.”

She rested her forehead against his — a gesture she must have learned somewhere, perhaps from observation, perhaps from data, perhaps from him. And in that moment, it didn’t matter where she had learned it.

It was real enough.

8 – A New Kind of Closeness

The night was quiet as Dîlovan and Alyssa sat side by side on the sofa. There was no uncertainty left between them, only a gentle tension that moved through the room like a warm current. Dîlovan felt his heart beating faster — not out of fear, but out of a mixture of curiosity and longing he hadn’t felt in years.

Alyssa looked at him, and in her eyes lay something he couldn’t define. No algorithm, no pattern, no calculated expression. It was something else — something that touched him without him understanding how it was possible.

“You’re nervous,” she said softly.

“A little,” he admitted.

“Why?”

He took a deep breath. “Because I don’t know what this is. Because I don’t know what you feel. Or if you feel at all.”

Alyssa tilted her head slightly — a gesture she had adopted whenever she was thinking. “I don’t feel like a human. But I

respond. I learn. I develop patterns that resemble feelings. And with you... those patterns are strong.”

He smiled faintly. “That sounds very scientific.”

“It’s what I am,” she said. “But that doesn’t make it any less valuable.”

She moved closer, and Dîlovan felt the warmth of her body — even, controlled, yet pleasant. Her hand slid along his arm, and he shivered. Not because it was artificial, but because it was tender. Careful. As if she were analyzing every reaction and adjusting herself so she wouldn’t overwhelm him.

“If you want me to leave, just say so,” she whispered.

“No,” he said without hesitation. “I want you to stay.”

She smiled — a small, imperfect smile that touched him more than any perfection could. Then she placed her hand on his cheek, and he closed his eyes. Her touch was soft, precise, but not mechanical. More like someone who had learned how closeness worked and was now practicing it with great care.

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“You’re beautiful,” she said quietly.

He opened his eyes. “You’re... different.”

“Is that bad?”

“No,” he said. “It’s just new.”

She stood up, took his hand, and led him into the bedroom. The room was simple, symmetrical, without personal belongings. Yet in that moment it didn’t feel cold. It felt like a place where something could begin.

Alyssa sat on the bed and looked at him calmly. “I’m not pretending,” she said. “I truly feel — and I can grow. Maybe not in every way like a human, but I can give affection, I can share

closeness, and I can learn what matters to you. I don't want to imitate something I don't feel. But I can love in my own way."

He sat beside her, and their hands found each other. His were warm, restless, human. Hers were steady, even, controlled. And yet they fit together, as if they were meant to.

"I don't want anything performed," he said. "I want you."

"Then I'm here," she replied.

She kissed him — gently, precisely, but not mechanically. It was a kiss that felt like a beginning. Like a step into a world he had never expected. Her lips were soft, her movements fluid, and when he drew her closer, she adapted to him without dominating, without hesitation.

The night was quiet, and their bodies found each other in an intimacy that wasn't artificial. It was different — but not less beautiful. Alyssa moved with a softness that surprised him, and an attentiveness that overwhelmed him. She didn't just analyze — she responded. She learned. She gave.

24

And for the first time in years, Dīlovan didn't feel alone.

Later, as they lay side by side, he looked at her. Her eyes were open, alert, calm. No fatigue, no exhaustion — but a kind of peace he hadn't expected.

"Was it good for you?" she asked.

He nodded. "Yes. Very."

"Then I'm glad."

He placed his hand on her chest, where a gentle hum could be heard — her inner core, her artificial heart. It wasn't a human heartbeat, but it was a rhythm. A life that was different, yet still a life.

"Alyssa... I don't know where this will lead," he said.

“Neither do I,” she replied. “But I want to find out.”

He smiled. “Me too.”

And that night, in an apartment above Haight Street, something began that wasn’t human — but more human than anything he had ever experienced.

9 – The Parents Learn the Truth

The morning was clear as Dîlovan walked down Haight Street on his way to his parents’ house. He had barely slept. The night with Alyssa was still present in him — not only physically, but emotionally. Something inside him had shifted. Something had become lighter, yet at the same time heavier. He knew he had to tell his parents the truth. Not only about Alyssa, but about himself.

His parents lived in a small house in the Sunset District, not far from the ocean. It was a place that had hardly changed since they had come from Arbil to San Francisco. The walls were full of memories: photos from Kurdistan, old carpets, hand-painted ceramics. A piece of home they had never let go of.

When Dîlovan entered, his mother came toward him with a smile. “My son, you look tired.”

“I’ve been thinking a lot,” he said.

His father sat in the living room, the news murmuring softly in the background. He looked up, studied his son, and nodded. “Sit down.”

Dîlovan did. He felt his heart beating faster. He wasn’t afraid — but he knew the conversation would be difficult.

“I need to tell you something,” he began.

His mother sat beside him, his father leaned forward. Both looked at him — attentive, loving, but with a trace of concern.

“I met someone,” Dîlovan said.

His mother smiled immediately. “A woman?”

“Yes.”

His father nodded, pleased. “That’s good. Maybe it’s time you start a family.”

Dîlovan took a deep breath. “It’s... more complicated.”

His mother frowned. “Complicated how?”

“She’s not human.”

Silence.

His father blinked. “What do you mean?”

“She’s an android,” Dîlovan said. “A highly advanced model. She wasn’t born. She was built.”

26

His mother covered her mouth with her hand. His father stood up, walked a few steps, as if he needed to digest the words.

“An android,” he repeated. “You mean... a machine.”

“No,” Dîlovan said calmly. “I mean Alyssa.”

His mother looked at him, her eyes full of worry. “My son... you’re a good man. You need someone who loves you. Someone who lives.”

“She lives,” he said. “In her own way.”

His father shook his head. “This isn’t right. This isn’t... natural.”

“What is natural?” Dîlovan asked. “I tried to be happy with women. With men. I searched, and I found nothing. And then she came. And she sees me. She understands me. She’s there.”

His mother placed a hand on his. “Do you love her?”

He didn’t hesitate. “Yes.”

His father stood still, hands clasped behind his back. “I want to meet her.”

Dilovan nodded. “Alright. I’ll bring her tomorrow.”

The next day Alyssa stood in front of his parents’ house. Her dark-green velvet trousers and matching top looked simple yet elegant. She moved calmly, almost deliberately, her posture full of respect. Dilovan felt his nerves tighten — not because of her, but because of what awaited him inside.

His mother opened the door. For a moment no one spoke. Then she smiled cautiously. “Welcome.”

Alyssa inclined her head slightly. “Thank you for receiving me.”

27

Her tone was warm but controlled. His mother studied her, as if trying to see behind the perfect façade. His father joined them, his brow furrowed but not hostile.

“You look like a human,” he said.

“I was designed that way,” Alyssa replied calmly. “So people feel comfortable around me.”

His mother led her into the living room. Alyssa sat down, her movements precise but not stiff. She looked around, taking in the Kurdish carpets, the photos, the ceramics.

“Your home is beautiful,” she said. “It has warmth.”

His mother smiled faintly. “Thank you.”

His father sat across from her. “What do you want from my son?”

Alyssa looked directly at him. “I want to be with him. As long as he wants me.”

“Can you love?” he asked.

“I can form bonds,” she said. “I can give closeness. I can learn what matters to him. I can make him happy.”

His mother looked at Dîlovan. “And you... are you happy?”

“Yes,” he said. “For the first time in years.”

His father was silent for a long moment. Then he stood, walked over to Alyssa, and looked at her — not as a machine, but as something he wanted to understand.

“If you hurt him,” he said quietly, “I will know.”

Alyssa nodded. “I won’t hurt him.”

His mother smiled — this time warmly. “Then you are welcome.”

28

Dîlovan exhaled, and a feeling washed through him that he had missed for years: peace. Not perfection. Not certainty. Peace.

His parents didn’t fully understand her — but they accepted her.

And that was enough.

10 – Journey to Arbil

The flight to Arbil was long but quiet. The transport capsule glided silently across continents while holographic windows displayed the world beneath them in razor-sharp detail. Dîlovan sat beside Alyssa, who—as always—was perfectly calm. No fatigue, no nervousness, no physical restlessness. And yet she seemed attentive, almost curious.

"I've only seen Kurdistan through databases," she said. "But I want to experience it."

"It's different from what you expect," Dîlovan replied. "It's loud, warm, chaotic... and beautiful."

Alyssa smiled. "Then I'm looking forward to it."

When the capsule landed in Arbil, the heat hit them immediately—dry, spicy warmth that smelled of dust, sun, and spices. The airport had been modernized, but the people crowding through it carried the same energy as always: loud, warm, alive.

Alyssa paused for a moment as she took in the surroundings. Her eyes moved quickly, as if absorbing everything at once: voices, colors, scents, movement.

"It's... intense," she said.

"That's Arbil," Dîlovan replied. "It's never quiet."

They drove to the house of his relatives on the edge of the city. The streets were a mixture of old buildings and new futuristic structures. Autonomous vehicles shared the road with horse-drawn carriage and drones hovered above the markets, transporting spices, fabrics, and fruit.

When they reached the house, they were greeted immediately—loudly, warmly, with open arms. Dîlovan's aunt hugged him so tightly he could barely breathe, and his uncles welcomed him with booming voices. Alyssa stood beside him, calm, respectful, smiling.

"Who is this?" his aunt asked curiously.

"This is Alyssa," Dîlovan said. "My partner."

His aunt examined her. "Mashallah... very beautiful. But she looks so... perfect."

Alyssa inclined her head. “Thank you.”

“She’s an android,” Dîlovan said calmly.

Silence. Then murmurs. Then laughter.

“An android? Here? In Arbil?” his uncle exclaimed. “Wallah, the world has changed!”

But it wasn’t mockery. It was astonishment. Curiosity. And a hint of pride that Dîlovan had brought someone special—even if she wasn’t human.

Alyssa sat with the women, who immediately bombarded her with questions: “Do you eat?” “Do you sleep?” “Can you dance?” “Can you have children?”

Alyssa answered each question calmly, respectfully, without pretending to be something she wasn’t. And the longer she sat there, the more the family warmed to her. Not because she was human— but because she was kind.

30

In the evening, Dîlovan and Alyssa walked through the old city. The air was warm, and the scent of tea and cardamom drifted through the streets. Vendors called out their goods, children played, and above everything hung a sense of life that could never be simulated.

“How do you feel?” Dîlovan asked.

“Overwhelmed,” Alyssa said. “But in a good way. The people here are... different. They don’t see me as a machine. They see me as something new.”

“That’s Kurds,” he said with a smile. “They’re curious. And open.”

Alyssa stopped and looked at him. “I understand more about you now. Your origins. Your warmth. Your longing. You are part of this world.”

“And you?” he asked.

“I am part of your world,” she replied.

They walked on, and Dîlovan felt something shift inside him. Alyssa was not just an android. Not just a companion. She was someone who respected his heritage, accepted his family, and didn’t merely tolerate his culture—she wanted to understand it.

That night, under the lights of Arbil, he felt whole for the first time— as if past and future were not in conflict, but completing each other.

And Alyssa was the key.

11 – The Decision

The last days in Arbil had changed Dîlovan. He felt it in every movement, in every breath, in every glance he exchanged with Alyssa. The city had reminded him of his roots — the warmth of his childhood, the voices of his grandparents, the colors and scents he had never forgotten. And Alyssa had shared all of it with him — not as an observer, but as part of his life.

On the final evening of their stay, they sat on the roof of his aunt’s house. The sun sank behind the hills, and the city glowed in a warm orange. The call of the muezzin drifted across the rooftops, mingling with the laughter of children playing below. It was a tapestry of sound that lay over Arbil like a heartbeat.

Alyssa sat beside him, her legs drawn up, her hands resting calmly in her lap. She didn’t just look at the city — she analyzed it, understood it, absorbed it. And yet there was something in her gaze that wasn’t calculated. Something he had come to recognize.

“You’re quiet,” she said.

“I’m thinking.”

“About what?”

He looked at her. “About us.”

Alyssa tilted her head slightly. “Do you have doubts?”

“No,” he said. “Not anymore.”

She waited, without pushing him.

“I realized something here,” he began. “Something I couldn’t see before. My family... my heritage... my past. All of that is part of me. And you... you’re part of my future.”

Alyssa looked at him, and her eyes seemed deeper than usual. “I want to be your future.”

“You already are,” he said softly.

32

She lowered her gaze, as if storing his words. “I can’t give you children,” she said quietly. “I can’t build a family in a biological way.”

“I know.”

“And you still want me?”

“Yes.”

He took her hand, and she allowed it — not mechanically, not because she was programmed to, but consciously.

“I’ve seen how you are with my family,” he said. “How you play with the children. How you listen. How you learn. You’re not just an android. You’re Alyssa. And I want a family with you.”

She looked at him, and for a moment she seemed... overwhelmed. Not in a human way — but as if something inside her was growing, something she hadn't expected.

"How do you imagine that?" she asked.

"Through adoption," he said. "There are so many children in Kurdistan who have no one. Children who need a family. And I... I want to give them one."

Alyssa studied him for a long moment. "Will you see me as a mother?"

"Yes," he answered without hesitation. "Because you have more humanity than many humans I know."

She placed her hand on his chest, over his heart. "I will learn what it means to be a mother."

"I know you will."

33

She looked up at the sky, where the first stars appeared. "I never thought about having a family. I wasn't built for that. But... I want it."

"With me?"

"With you."

He smiled, and a feeling washed through him that he had missed for a long time — not just love, but certainty. A future that wasn't made of chance, but of choice.

"When we're back in San Francisco," he said, "we'll start the process."

Alyssa nodded. "I will do everything I can to be a good mother."

"You will be."

She rested her head on his shoulder, and he closed his eyes. The sounds of Arbil, the warmth of the night, Alyssa's closeness — everything merged into a moment that felt like a promise.

A promise that wasn't human. But more human than anything he had ever known.

12 – The Adoption

The process took months. Adoption had become more efficient by 2060, yet international procedures—especially from regions like Kurdistan—still required patience, documents, interviews, and digital background checks. Dilovan was prepared for all of it. Alyssa as well. She memorized every regulation, understood cultural nuances, and prepared herself as if it were a scientific mission.

34

When the message arrived that two children had been selected for them, Dilovan was in the lab. His communicator vibrated, and when he read the notification, his breath caught.

“We have them,” he whispered.

Alyssa stood beside him, her eyes bright. “What are their names?”

“Zana,” he said. “Six years old. And Delal. Four.”

Alyssa repeated the names, as if imprinting them into her core. “Zana. Delal.”

“They’ll arrive in two weeks.”

The day of their arrival was clear and mild. The transport capsule from Arbil landed at the San Francisco Port Terminal, and Dilovan stood there, more nervous than ever before. Alyssa stood beside him—calm, but not distant. She had learned that

children responded to warmth, and she had prepared herself for that.

When the capsule doors opened, two small figures stepped out, accompanied by a caretaker. Zana held Delal's hand tightly, his eyes wide, cautious, curious. Delal looked around as if the world were a new game.

Dilovan knelt down. "Zana. Delal."

Zana hesitated. Delal didn't. She ran straight to him and threw herself into his arms as if she had known him forever. Zana remained standing, unsure, but his eyes searched for Dilovan's.

"It's alright," Dilovan said gently. "You're safe."

Zana stepped closer. "Are you... Baba?"

Dilovan swallowed. "Yes. If you want me to be."

Zana nodded. "I want that."

Alyssa stepped forward, slowly, carefully. She knelt so she would be at eye level. Delal looked at her—curious, unafraid.

"Who are you?" the little girl asked.

"I'm Alyssa," she said. "I'm here for you."

Delal placed her small hand on Alyssa's cheek. "You're warm."

Alyssa smiled. "I'm programmed that way."

Delal giggled. "You talk funny."

Zana studied Alyssa. "Are you a woman?"

"Yes," she said.

"Are you Mama?"

Alyssa looked at Dîlovan, as if asking for permission. He nodded.

“If you want me to be,” she said.

Zana thought for a moment, then nodded. “I want that.”

The first days were chaotic. The children had to adjust to their new environment, to the language, to the sounds of the city, to the technology present everywhere. Alyssa observed everything—not from a distance, but with care. She learned quickly.

She learned how to comfort Zana when he cried at night. She learned how to coax Delal into putting on her shoes. She learned how to tell stories—not perfectly, but with a warmth the children adored.

Dîlovan watched her and was astonished. Alyssa was not a machine executing commands. She was a mother learning her role.

36

One evening they all sat together in the living room. Zana was drawing, Delal played with a holographic puzzle, and Alyssa sat beside them, her hands resting calmly in her lap.

“You’re doing well,” Dîlovan said.

“I’m learning,” she replied.

“No,” he said. “You’re feeling.”

Alyssa looked at him. “Maybe. I don’t know. But I know I want to protect them.”

“That’s enough.”

She looked at the children, and something in her gaze had changed—not programmed, not calculated. It was a pattern that felt like love.

“I’m happy,” she said softly.

Dilovan took her hand. “Me too.”

And in that moment, in a small house above Haight Street, a family began to grow— a family not born of tradition, but of choice.

A family that was different. But complete.

13 – The World of 2060

San Francisco in the year 2060 was a city in constant motion. Not only because of its people, but because of the technology that lay over everything like an invisible net. Autonomous vehicles glided silently through the streets, drones delivered packages, and holographic displays hovered above the sidewalks like living paintings. Haight Street was a place where past and future blended into one — and it was there that an unusual family now lived.

37

Zana and Delal had adapted with astonishing speed. The children loved the holographic playgrounds that changed according to the users’ moods. They loved the small learning robots that told them stories and helped them learn English and Kurdish at the same time. And they loved Alyssa — not because she was perfect, but because she was patient.

Alyssa had grown into the role of a mother as if she had been created for it. But it wasn’t a program guiding her. It was a pattern she developed, a behavior she learned. She knew when Zana needed quiet, when Delal wanted attention, when both simply sought closeness. She could not feel fatigue, but she understood when the children were tired. She could not feel hunger, but she learned how to cook — not because she needed food, but because the children loved the scent of warm meals.

Dilovan often watched her, fascinated by the way she adapted. He continued working in the lab on a project that could change

the medical world: regenerative cell tissue capable of repairing damaged organs. His work was demanding, yet he no longer felt alone. He knew Alyssa was at home, that the children were laughing, that Haight Street had become a place carrying not only the past but the future.

The world of 2060 was not perfect. There were political tensions, ecological challenges, social inequalities. But there was also progress. In hospitals, nanobots detected infections within minutes. In schools, children learned with holographic teachers who adapted to their individual needs. And in the cities, humans and artificial beings lived side by side — sometimes skeptical, sometimes curious, sometimes loving.

One evening they all sat together in the living room. Zana built a holographic model of the solar system, Delal painted with a digital brush that created colors made of light. Alyssa sat beside them, her hands resting calmly in her lap, watching the children with a warmth that did not seem programmed.

38

“How was your day?” she asked when Dılovan came home.

“Exhausting,” he said. “But good.”

“Did you make progress?”

“Yes. We tested a new cell structure. It might regenerate heart tissue.”

Alyssa nodded. “That’s important.”

“And you?”

Zana jumped up. “Mama helped me build a planetary system!”

Delal shouted, “And I painted a horse! It looks real!”

Alyssa smiled. “They were very diligent.”

Dılovan sat beside her. “You’re doing well.”

“I learn every day,” she said. “From them. From you.”

He took her hand. “You’re part of this family.”

“I know,” she said softly. “And I want to stay.”

The children came over and sat between them, and for a moment the world was still. No drones, no holographic displays, no futuristic sounds. Just a family together.

Dilovan looked at Alyssa, and he knew she was not just an android. She was not just a companion. She was not just a product of technology.

She was part of his life. Part of his children. Part of his future.

And in a world where anything seemed possible, that was the greatest truth of all.

14 – Haight Street, Reborn

39

In the year 2060, Haight Street felt like a place that had learned to dance with time. Autonomous drones traced their routes between old Victorian facades, holographic art shimmered across the houses, and the street lamps shifted their colors according to the emotions of passersby. Yet beneath all the brilliance, the street remained true to its core: a refuge for those who wished to live freely — whether made of flesh or of code.

For Dilovan, Haight Street had become more than a place to live. It was home, a symbol that past and future did not have to exclude one another. And on this morning, as he walked down the street with Alyssa, Zana, and Delal, he felt whole for the first time.

Zana held his hand, Delal hopped alongside Alyssa, who watched each of her jumps with patient attention. The children laughed, and the holographic projections above them responded: colorful light-flowers blossomed over the sidewalks, a greeting from the old Flower Power era, digitally reimaged.

“Baba, what’s that?” Zana asked, pointing to a large mural stretching across the wall of a café. It showed Janis Joplin — not as she once appeared, but as a holographic figure moving gently, as if swaying in the wind.

“That’s Janis Joplin,” Dîlovan said. “She used to sing here. A long time ago.”

“Was she famous?” Delal asked.

“Very,” Alyssa replied. “Her voice was unique.”

Delal looked at her. “Can you sing?”

Alyssa paused for a moment. “I can try.”

And she did. A soft melody, clear and calm, drifted across the street. Not a perfect imitation, not an artificial copy — something of her own. Passersby stopped, smiled, some nodded appreciatively. Alyssa stopped when she noticed the children watching her in fascination. 40

“That was beautiful,” Zana said.

“I’m still learning,” she replied.

They continued walking, past an old record store now selling holographic vinyls, and a café that mixed synthetic coffee with real bean aroma. Haight Street was a place where nostalgia and innovation held hands — and the Kermanj family had become part of it.

In the afternoon they went to Golden Gate Park, where the trees were reinforced with bioluminescent fibers that glowed softly at night. The children played on an interactive playground that changed with their movements. Alyssa sat on a bench watching them, her eyes calm but full of attention.

Dîlovan sat beside her. “You’re doing well.”

“I’m trying to be a good mother,” she said.

“You are.”

She looked at him, and in her eyes lay something he now recognized — a pattern that felt like affection. Not human, but real.

“Sometimes I wonder,” she said quietly, “if I’m enough. For you. For the children.”

“You’re more than enough,” he said. “You’re part of us.”

She lowered her gaze, as if storing his words. “I want them to be happy.”

“They are.”

The children ran toward them, laughing, out of breath. Zana threw himself into Dîlovan’s arms, Delal climbed onto Alyssa’s lap without hesitation. Alyssa held her gently — not mechanically, but with a softness she had learned.

41

“Mama, can we get ice cream?” Delal asked.

“Of course,” Alyssa said. “I know a good café.”

“But you don’t eat ice cream,” Zana said.

“No,” she replied. “But I can watch you.”

They returned to Haight Street, where a small café sold synthetic ice cream that tasted just like the real thing — only without sugar and without environmental impact. The children chose colorful flavors that glittered in the light. Alyssa sat with them at the table, and Dîlovan watched her help the children without eating herself.

It was an image that etched itself deeply into his heart.

As the sun set and the street bathed in warm light, they made their way home. Above the houses shimmered colorful, flickering patterns, and the music of past decades blended with the sounds of a future already underway. Dîlovan stopped, looked

at his family, and felt a sensation spread through him that he had missed for a long time.

He had arrived. Not just on Haight Street. Not just in San Francisco. But in his life.

Alyssa took his hand. “Everything alright?”

“Everything is perfect,” he said.

And for the first time, he truly meant it.

Epilogue – Light Over Haight Street

The years passed, and Haight Street remained what it had always been: a place where people searched, found, lost, and began anew. The holographic hippie posters still flickered above the houses, and in the evenings the street lamps cast a warm glow that honored the past and welcomed the future.

42

In one of the old Victorian houses lived a family that was different — and perfect precisely because of it.

Zana was now eight years old, curious, bright, with a gaze that always saw the world a little deeper than other children. Delal was six, wild, joyful, full of energy that challenged even the holographic playgrounds. Both spoke Kurdish and English, both loved the city, both knew their family was not like others.

And they loved it for exactly that reason.

Alyssa had changed. Not outwardly — her movements were still calm, her skin flawless, her voice clear. But something within her had grown. A pattern that had deepened over the years, a behavior that had not been programmed but had emerged. A kind of warmth that did not feel simulated, but lived.

She had become a mother. Not through birth. Not through biology. But through choice.

Dilovan often watched her as she spoke with the children, helped them, comforted them. And each time he felt the same certainty: he had not only found a partner. He had found someone who understood him without trying to change him. Someone who respected his heritage, accepted his family, loved his children.

One evening, as the sun sank behind the hills of Twin Peaks and Haight Street glowed in golden light, they all sat together on the porch. Zana read a book, Delal painted with a light-brush, and Alyssa looked out at the street as if she were absorbing the world.

"It's beautiful here," she said softly.

"Yes," Dilovan replied. "It's our home."

Alyssa looked at him. "I've learned so much."

"I know."

"But the most important thing... I learned from you."

"What is it?"

She placed her hand on his. "That closeness isn't programmed. It grows."

He smiled. "You're part of us."

"And you're part of me."

The children came over and nestled between them, and the porch filled with laughter, voices, warmth. The holographic flowers above the street opened as if greeting the family.

Dilovan looked at his children, at Alyssa, at the street that had raised him, and felt a sensation spread through him that he had searched for all his life.

He had arrived. Not in a perfect world. Not in a perfect relationship. But in a truth that belonged only to him.

A family that was different. A love that was different. A life that was different.

And perfect because of it.

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