

Pathways, by Urwah Arif

Summary: *A patient with acute depression is offered a revolutionary new treatment from a Professor he once knew in school, before their dissimilar outlooks led them down different paths.*

Characters:

PROF ADAM MCDONALD (m), 30s
DR MUSA AHMAD (-),
DR JANE SARA (f)
DANIAL FRASER (m), 30s

PROF. ADAM *is in DR. MUSA's office and DR SARA is also there.*

DR MUSA: Professor, I would like to introduce you to Dr Jane Sara -- she is a psychiatrist by profession.

DR SARA: Hello Professor McDonald. Nice to meet you.

PROF ADAM: It's my pleasure. Please, call me Adam.

DR MUSA: Last week I attended a Conference on Neuro-degenerative diseases where I met Dr Sara. She gave an excellent talk on acute depression and associated disorders. So I took the opportunity to talk with her about our vagus nerve implant.

DR SARA: I must commend your research team, Adam. I heard about electroceuticals being developed ---- but I never knew they were ready for clinical trials.

PROF ADAM: Yes, now we are only waiting for volunteers.

DR SARA: Dr Musa told me you are looking for people with acute depression, who are not responding to pharmaceutical treatments----- I have a patient in mind.

DR MUSA: You told me you have been treating him for the last five years, but now he is not responding to any treatments.

DR SARA: Yes---- sadly he attempted to take his own life last month ----- **(sigh)** It was his third attempt.

PROF ADAM: Very sad---- If he is in such a bad condition then our nerve implant is really going to help him, he might no longer even need medication.

DR SARA: Sounds great---- I brought him with me so we can begin the discussion-----and ideally consent him without delay.

PROF ADAM: Yes, That's critical ---- Let's call him in

DR MUSA picks up the phone to call his secretary and ask him to send the patient in.

DR MUSA: Can you send in Mr. Fraser, please? Thank you.

Beat.

DR MUSA (cont'd): I have gone through the patient's history. We might need a CT scan and MRI reports. It is necessary to understand the physiology of his nerve before making the final decision.

PROF ADAM: Yes, we must see the orientation of the nerve to plan the procedure.

DR SARA: We can work on these things once he agrees to volunteer.

There is a knock on the door.

DR MUSA: Yes please!

Door opens. DANIAL enters the office ---- footsteps---- door closes. Danial sits in front of PROF ADAM.

DANIAL: Hello...

Everyone says their assorted 'Hellos'.

PROF ADAM (*faltering in dawning recognition*): Hello----Danial!

FLASHBACK 25 years ago. Two high school students talking about their future. They are soon going to start Highers.

STUDENT ADAM: Have you planned what subjects you are going to choose for your Highers Danial?

STUDENT DANIAL: Highers?? Rubbish----- I am not a fool ---I will not spoil my beautiful summer studying

STUDENT ADAM: It's not rubbish at all-----education always helps make your future secure.

STUDENT DANIAL: Nah nah---- my friend. It's only money that makes your future secure.

STUDENT ADAM: And where are you getting the money if you can't get a job?

STUDENT DANIAL: I am not worried about the money, mate, I am worried because I have already wasted so much time. I want to enjoy the colours of life! A bit! And *then* I will earn money, and then I'll be happy, and you will be---- What crap are you going to do anyway?

STUDENT ADAM: I am going to be having some goals in my life. I want to contribute to society/

/STUDENT DANIAL snorts.

STUDENT ADAM (cont'd): I know I've been lucky. Secure. Supported. So--- I want to study Engineering, pay something back/

STUDENT DANIAL (arrogant): Rubbish! 'pay something back?' Now *that* is a bad choice---- You, and me, do not owe anything to society----- society owes us.

FLASHBACK ENDS

DR SARA: Danial! How are you doing today?

DANIAL: I am fine. Thank you.

DR SARA: This is Dr Musa, the neurosurgeon, and this is Professor McDonald/

DANIAL (almost recognition): Adam---?

DR SARA: The biomedical engineer who I told you about? Would you please mind sharing with them why you attempted to take your own life? We are here to help you.

PROF ADAM: Danial if you would rather/

DANIAL: No. I was always overlooking my problems. Rather than solving them, I kept on moving away from them. I never planned anything ahead of time. ----- My arrogance destroyed me. I lost my job----- I lost my house -----I lost my family--- I have no reason to live--- no goals to achieve----- I am done with my life.

PROF ADAM: Who says you don't have any goals? You just need to look around and you will see there is still a life ahead---Maybe your family is waiting for you.

DANIAL: How could I provide them security? I can't manage my depression --- I can't earn my living ---I can never make them happy.

DR MUSA (trying to get things back on track): Dr Sara talked to you about the nerve implant. You are the best candidate.

DR SARA: With the implant, you can recover. But we need you to be strong and ready to fight your disease.

DANIAL: I miss my kids. I loved playing with them. I am happy to hear I might enjoy my life again. ---- But--- I need time to think before making any decision.

PROF ADAM: It's your right to decide this without any pressure.

DR MUSA: Adam, that is not what/

PROF ADAM: Take your time--- decide --- If you need more information, do give us a ring. Give me a ring, any time/

DANIAL: Thank you. *(Beat)* I'd like to go now.

PROF ADAM: Let me accompany you to the exit. *(To DR SARA and DR MUSA)* Please excuse us.

After coming out of the office

PROF ADAM (cont'd): Danial----do you recognise me?

DANIAL: I remember. You were right about your philosophy of life 25 years ago. It is not only about getting benefits but also giving and sharing with others. I am happy to see you achieving your goals *(A beat, then reluctantly)* Can I give you a hug?

PROF ADAM: Definitely.

Sobbing and hugging.

DANIAL: I missed you during my bad times my friend--- I really missed you. You always warned me. You were right; education always helps you in all walks of life. If I had completed high school, I might have had some skills to earn my living when I lost my job.

PROF ADAM: Yes, no matter what you are doing ---- what your profession is ----- hard work, determination and education pay you back.

DANIAL: If I do go for the implant, there would be only one reason; to help humanity by volunteering. I am proud of you my friend.

PROF ADAM: I am always with you. I want to see you living a happy life.

DANIAL: I'll----- see you soon

END