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CHAPTER 15 · MAYBE I WAS WRONG

Going Back

A story about the courage to return

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It had been forty-three days since Camila said the thing she shouldn't have said.

She knew it was forty-three because she'd thought about it every one of them.

She had said it in anger, in public, in front of people she didn't know very well. She had said it about Joana, her oldest friend — something true that was also unkind, the most dangerous kind of thing to say. She had said it and seen Joana's face and known immediately that she had crossed something that couldn't be uncrossed.

Joana had not spoken to her since.

Camila had told herself it was Joana's fault for being too sensitive. Then she had told herself it was complicated. Then she had stopped telling herself anything and just avoided the whole subject, which worked fine until she was trying to fall asleep and it would come back again, sharp-edged and heavy.

Her older brother asked what was wrong. She explained.

"So go and apologise," he said.

"It's been forty-three days."

He shrugged. "I've apologised for things from three years ago. It's not about the time."

"What if she doesn't want to hear it?"

"Then at least you'll have said it." He paused. "But Camila — you know Joana. Do you actually think she's hoping you won't come?"

Camila thought about Joana. About who she actually was, not who the part of Camila that wanted to feel blameless had decided she was.

The next afternoon she knocked on Joana's door.

When Joana opened it, she didn't look surprised. She looked cautious.

"I was wrong," Camila said. "What I said was unkind and I said it in public and you didn't deserve that. I've been trying to think of a reason it wasn't my fault for forty-three days and there isn't one."

Joana looked at her for a long moment.

"Forty-three days," she said.

"Yeah."

"I counted too," Joana said. And she stood back to let her in.

*Going back to say you were wrong is hard. But it is always the
shorter road.*

N O I R A C I E L

A companion to “Maybe I Was Wrong”

Contributions help fund The Invisible Roots Scholarship —
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