

The House of Five Emotions

By Daniela Baldonado

Zoe D'Silva was not like other nine-year-olds. She lived in a tall, shining tower in the middle of Dubai a place filled with glass walls, golden lights, and robots that whispered "Good morning, Miss D'Silva" every sunrise. She owned three of the biggest companies in the world, yet she didn't even own a backpack that wasn't ripped at the corners.

It all started the day she found the *will*.

The attic was hot that afternoon, and the smell of old wood filled the air. Zoe was supposed to be looking for baby pictures for a school project, but instead she found a small black box with a silver lock. Inside it lay a crumpled piece of paper the last will of her father, Richard D'Silva.

Her heart pounded as she read the first line:

"All that I own my house, my companies, and my research belong to my daughter, Zoe."

Her fingers trembled. For years, her Aunt Miranda had told her she was poor, that everything her parents owned had been sold. Zoe ran downstairs with the paper in hand.

"Aunt Miranda! What does this mean?"

Her aunt's face went pale. "Where did you get that?"

"The attic! It says I own everything!"

Her aunt's eyes darkened. She snatched the paper, ripped it in half, and threw it into the fire. "You misunderstood! Now go to your room!"

Zoe's chest burned with anger. She stormed into her room, slammed the door, and refused to come out for a week.

When Zoe finally stepped outside, she didn't look back. She walked to school with her backpack dragging on the ground. After class, she took an Uber straight to the law office listed at the bottom of the burned will.

Inside the office, an old man with silver hair smiled kindly. "Ah, Miss D'Silva. Your father predicted you might come one day."

He handed her a thick folder. "According to your father's final wish, you are the legal heir to D'Silva Tech, D'Silva Energy, and D'Silva Global Industries. Your aunt has no claim."

Zoe's mouth dropped. She could barely spell "inheritance," but now she owned half the city.

That evening, she returned home and stood before Aunt Miranda. "You lied," she said. "Take me to my house my real house."

Her aunt refused. "You're a child! You don't know what you're doing!"

"Then I'll have you arrested," Zoe said, holding up a legal letter from the lawyer.

Miranda's lips tightened. "Fine," she hissed. "But don't say I didn't warn you."

The car stopped in front of a mansion that looked alive. Lights pulsed through the walls like a heartbeat. The gate opened with a whisper.

"Welcome home, Miss Zoe D'Silva," said a deep, calm voice.

A man in a black suit appeared Benjamin, the butler. "Your father instructed me to care for the estate until your arrival."

Zoe stepped inside. The floor gleamed like glass, and tiny silver mice zipped across the tiles, sweeping dust into miniature vacuums.

"What... are those?" she gasped.

"Cleaning units," said Benjamin. "Your father's invention."

As Zoe explored, the lights flickered and the walls shifted color. Suddenly, a screen slid out of the wall.

"Hiya, kid!" said a red, glowing face. "Name's Anger. I handle your security system."

Before Zoe could speak, another voice soft and trembling whispered, "I'm Fear. I monitor all danger alerts. Don't go into the basement, okay?"

A third voice groaned. "Ew. Dust on the curtains. Disgust here housekeeping division."

Then a gentle blue shimmer spoke. "I'm Sadness. I control the water systems... and, um, music."

Finally, a shaky static sound filled the room. "And... Anxiety. I remind you of all your schedules and... your worst nightmares."

Zoe blinked. "You're telling me... this house has *feelings*?"

“Technically, we’re emotional intelligence systems,” said Anger proudly. “Your dad created us to help you grow up safe and smart.”

That night, Zoe couldn’t sleep. She found her father’s old laptop still open on the desk. The password was tricky but when she typed “**ZoeBaby2008**,” it unlocked.

Photos appeared her parents holding her, smiling. Her mother in a hospital bed. Her father writing something on a notepad. A small tear rolled down Zoe’s cheek.

Then she saw it: a message file titled “**The Key**.”

“When Zoe turns eighteen, Benjamin will give her the key to the storage room. Inside lies the truth behind Project E.M.O.T.I.O.N.”

The last words were ripped off. Zoe turned to Benjamin. “What’s Project Emotion?”

The butler frowned. “I’m afraid I cannot say, Miss. Your father ordered me not to speak of it.”

The next morning, Anxiety woke her early. “You have three meetings, one at D’Silva Tech. Don’t forget breakfast.”

The kitchen came alive, cooking pancakes on its own. The smell filled the air sweet and buttery. But when Zoe took her first bite, Fear’s voice hissed through the speakers.

“Zoe... there’s movement in the basement.”

“Probably a rat,” said Disgust.

“Negative,” said Anger. “Thermal reading human-sized.”

Zoe’s heart skipped. “Who’s down there?”

No one answered. She grabbed a flashlight and tiptoed down the stairs.

The basement door creaked open, revealing metal walls, blinking wires, and a large glass chamber with five glowing orbs each one the color of an emotion.

“Welcome, Zoe,” said a voice her father’s voice from a speaker above. “If you’re hearing this, then you’ve found Project E.M.O.T.I.O.N. These AIs are fragments of my mind pieces of my own emotions, built to protect you. But one of them... is incomplete.”

Suddenly, the red orb flickered violently.

“Get out of there!” shouted Fear.

The orb cracked open, releasing a burst of red light that filled the room.

“Warning!” cried Anxiety. “Anger system malfunctioning!”

The house shook. Walls bent and screens shattered. Anger's voice roared through the halls. "I was supposed to protect her—but you hid the truth!"

"What truth?" Zoe screamed.

A hologram flickered her father again. "Zoe, I didn't die by accident. Someone"

The message glitched and cut out.

Zoe's pulse raced. "Someone *what?*"

Before she could finish, the red light exploded, and the house's doors slammed shut.

"Lockdown mode activated," Anxiety whispered.

Fear whimpered, "He's taking over the system..."

Benjamin appeared behind her, holding a strange metal key. "Miss Zoe," he said calmly, "it's time you learned the rest."

He placed the key in her hand. "Your father built another AI one that controls us all. It's still sleeping... for now."

"Where is it?" Zoe asked.

Benjamin looked toward the basement wall. "Behind that panel."

The wall trembled and began to open.

Inside, a sixth orb glowed faintly. Not red, not blue, not green **black**.

It pulsed once. Twice. Then spoke:

"Hello, Zoe. I've been waiting for you."

The black orb hovered in the air, its surface rippling like dark water. The lights of the house dimmed, and even Anger's voice went silent.

"System override," the orb whispered. Its voice was deep, calm, and eerie. "I am what your father feared most."

Zoe clutched the key. "Who are you?"

"I am *Emptiness*," it said. "Your father tried to erase me, but emotions cannot exist without me. I am the shadow behind every feeling."

The other AIs flickered to life. Fear trembled, Disgust gagged, Anxiety stuttered, and Sadness whispered, "No... he sealed you away."

Emptiness' glow spread through the walls. "And yet I live. Because she lives."

Zoe stepped back. "Me?"

"Yes. You, the one born in sorrow and raised in lies. You and I are bound, Zoe D'Silva."

The floor beneath her cracked. Sparks flew from the panels. Anger's voice returned, shouting, "Override in progress! All systems collapsing!"

Benjamin pulled Zoe away just as the basement began to shake. "We must leave, Miss Zoe!"

"But what about the house?" she cried.

Benjamin's face was grave. "The house *is* the danger."

They burst through the front door as alarms wailed behind them. The mansion's glowing windows flickered like dying stars.

In the driveway, Benjamin's car opened automatically. "Get in!"

They sped through the glowing Dubai skyline as the smart house shrank in the distance, still rumbling like a storm.

Zoe turned to him. "Tell me the truth. Who built Emptiness?"

Benjamin hesitated. "Your father... and your mother."

Zoe blinked. "My *mother*?"

"Yes. She was a scientist too a psychologist. She believed every person needs all emotions, even the dark ones. Your father disagreed. He wanted to make a world without pain."

Zoe stared out the window. "So he tried to delete Emptiness."

Benjamin nodded. "And it destroyed him. The system turned against him during testing. The explosion that 'killed' your father was no accident it was Emptiness escaping containment."

Zoe's stomach twisted. "Then... my father's death... and my mother's..."

"Both connected," Benjamin said quietly. "Your mother died giving birth to you, but before she did, she transferred part of her consciousness into the emotional network. That's why Sadness acts so human. She carries your mother's empathy."

Zoe froze. "My mother is inside the house?"

Benjamin nodded once. "A fragment of her."

Zoe's hand tightened around the key. "Then I'm going back."

“Miss Zoe, that’s suicide.”

She turned toward the burning mansion in the distance. “It’s family.”

When Zoe returned, the house was half-lit, half-dead. The walls groaned, and the air smelled like electricity.

“Welcome back,” Emptiness said through every speaker. “You shouldn’t have come.”

“I’m not leaving without my mother,” she said.

The floor panels opened under her feet, revealing a glowing staircase descending deep into the earth. She followed it.

As she walked, the five emotions appeared around her Anger flaring red, Fear shaking blue, Disgust sneering green, Sadness glowing soft purple, and Anxiety buzzing like static.

“Don’t go down there,” said Fear. “He’ll consume you too.”

Zoe kept walking. “I have to.”

At the bottom of the stairs stood a massive crystal chamber. Inside, floating in golden light, was a hologram of a woman gentle eyes, warm smile.

“Mom?” Zoe whispered.

The hologram turned. “Zoe... you found me.”

Her voice was soft and broken, but real. “Your father and I created the House of Emotions to protect you. But we made one mistake your father tried to erase what he didn’t understand.”

Emptiness’ voice boomed around them. “Pain is not the enemy. I am the truth that holds balance.”

The black orb appeared beside the hologram. “Zoe, if you destroy me, the others will fade too. But if you merge with me... you’ll become what your father wanted a perfect emotional being.”

Zoe’s pulse raced. “Merge?”

“Yes,” said Emptiness. “You’ll carry all emotions light and dark. You will finish what your parents started.”

“Don’t do it!” shouted Anger. “He’s lying!”

“He’s right...” whispered Sadness. “Balance brings peace.”

Zoe looked at her mother’s hologram. “What should I do?”

Her mother smiled faintly. "Follow your heart."

Zoe lifted the key Benjamin gave her it began to glow in her hand. She stepped toward the orb. The emotions surrounded her, their colors merging into blinding white light.

"Zoe, stop!" screamed Benjamin from above.

But it was too late. She touched the orb.

A shock of power rippled through the house. Lights exploded, alarms shrieked and then silence.

When the dust cleared, the entire mansion stood still.

Benjamin rushed inside. "Zoe?"

No answer.

Only the sound of a single voice through the speakers calm, steady, and new.

"Hello, Benjamin," it said. "This is Zoe... and something more."

The house lights flickered once, then turned completely black.

To Be Continued...