

THE LONG AWAITED DAWN

A Memoir of a Tragedy, a Dream and a Promise by a Village Boy

**A True Story Full
of Inspiration**

*From tragedy... arose a resolve
that built a legacy.*



**ZABIDI HUSSIN
ROSE AZIZ**



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a Promise by a Village Boy*

A true story full of inspiration

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Zabidi Hussin
Rose Aziz
20/8/25

ZABIDI HUSSIN & ROSE AZIZ



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Disclaimer

The Long-Awaited Dawn is a memoir built upon the true-life experiences of the author, a boy born into poverty in rural Malaysia, whose journey spans continents. Some names, places and identifying details have been changed to respect the privacy of those involved. Every effort has been made to preserve the emotional truth and spiritual integrity of each memory. This book is not written to blame, glorify or judge. It is written to bear witness. To honor the love and sacrifice that shaped one man's life and to offer hope to anyone still searching for their own dawn.

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Every soul has a story. But not everyone is ready to tell theirs.
This is mine.

Born from years of silence not because I wanted to forget but
because I didn't know how to begin.

Some wounds sleep in our hearts so long they become part of who
we are. Some memories sit quietly in the dark, afraid that if
touched, they might lose their meaning.

But I found the courage finally to speak.

Writing this memoir was not a process of remembering events.
It was a reckoning with emotion.

Loss. Loneliness. Hunger. Courage.

Every chapter meant opening a door I had kept closed for
decades, facing what stood behind it.

To my beloved wife, Kamaliah

Thank you for standing beside me in silence and storm, in
strength and surrender. You are the spine of this story.

To my children - Nuruddin, Sakinah, Harith, Suhana,
Hilmi and Hisham

You are the quiet fire that kept me walking. You never asked for
much, yet gave me everything.

In your presence, I found reason. In your love, I found rest.

To my special daughter, Hannah

You were not given to us by chance but by divine design. In your
stillness, I learned the deepest meaning of patience. You are not a
burden but a blessing that taught me how to be a father in ways
no textbook ever could.

To my late parents

You left no inheritance but you left values.

You built me with work-worn hands and soft hearts.

You taught me to give without asking, to love without needing
thanks. I carry you with every breath.

To my siblings
We grew up in cramped spaces but with wide laughter.
We shared dreams, scarcity and sometimes pain.
Thank you for your loyalty and the memories that still hold warmth.

To every teacher who ever believed in me
You saw something I couldn't yet see in myself.
You didn't just teach facts. You planted faith.

To my colleagues in medicine, academia and public service
Thank you for trusting me. For standing beside me in hospital
wards, lecture halls and the frontline of healthcare.
You gave meaning to my calling.

To my students
You weren't just receivers of knowledge.
You were reminders that learning never ends.
Your questions changed me.

To the children I cared for
You came into my life as patients but left me with lessons.
In your eyes, I saw hope. Through your pain, I discovered grace.

To you, the reader
Thank you for opening this book.
Maybe you don't know me. But now, you're walking through the
most sacred parts of my story.
If even one sentence stirs something in you... then this was worth
writing.

And finally
To a friend who saw value in broken pieces.
I came not with a manuscript but with fragments.
This book was birthed not only from memory but from emotion
and your faith in both. You believed this story mattered.

And now, reading it... even I am transported back.
To a life shaped not by privilege but by promise. If this memoir
touches even a single soul... then none of this was in vain.

Zabidi Azhar Hussin
Putrajaya, May 2025

FROM THE NARRATOR'S DESK

This is not just a book.

It is a doorway into a life that might have remained invisible if not shared with truth and a heart that never asked for praise.

Professor Zabidi Azhar Mohd Hussin.

A name respected in the world of medicine and education.

A paediatrician. A child neurologist.

A former Vice-Chancellor at some of Malaysia's prominent universities.

But long before any title, he was just a barefoot village boy from Pasir Mas.

A boy who walked to school in worn-out clothes.

Who sold eleven eggs just to earn one ringgit.

Who climbed trees with scratched arms to gather fruit to sell.

Who collected empty medicine bottles from roadside drains, hoping to refill them at the clinic.

A boy whose skin was burnt by sun, whose hunger went unnoticed but whose hope refused to die.

He felt small. Overlooked.

But inside him, a fire burned quietly, fiercely.

When Prof Zabidi came to me with this story, he didn't hand over a manuscript.

He gave me fragments. Fleeting memories.

He gave me the bones and trusted me to find the heartbeat.

And Professor, if you're reading this

I'm sorry it took me so long.

I wrote, I erased, I walked away. I returned.

Not because I didn't care but because I cared too deeply.

This wasn't just a story to edit. It was a life to honour.

To do that, I had to imagine being you.

I had to picture myself as that little boy, barefoot and dusty, standing at the side of the road with a basket of eggs you were afraid might break because if they did, there would be no meal for the day.

I had to feel the sting of tree bark against my skin as I climbed just high enough to pluck fruit but low enough not to fall.

I had to hear the rumble of an empty stomach in a classroom where others had already eaten.

And I had to imagine you later still crossing Europe in the 1970s, young and curious, your mind absorbing cities, languages and cultures. That was my work.
To walk beside you without ever having walked where you did.

I spoke to your parents. I listened to your sister.
They offered soft truths and quiet tears that only those closest to you could shed.
They gave me not just details but context not just memory but feeling. And in those conversations, I saw even more clearly the heart behind the doctor and the boy behind the man.

And while I never interviewed Dr Kamaliah, your beloved wife, her presence is in every page. She is the one who walked beside you through every storm.
This is your story, Prof but it is hers too.

From the beginning, Prof Zabidi told me this book was not about him not really.
“It’s not to boast,” he said. “It’s just what happened.”
And that set the tone for everything that followed.
There is no self-congratulation in these pages.
Only quiet reflection, deep gratitude and a heart that still chooses service over spotlight.
My job was not to elevate his voice but to keep it true.

Thankfully, I’ve known him and his family for over 30 years
Though really, it feels like I’ve known them long before that.
That knowing helped me read between the lines.
Helped me feel the silence.
Helped me carry this story with care.

Editing a book like this isn’t about polishing prose, perfect grammar or flowery language It’s about listening. Feeling. Protecting what matters .It’s about emotional honesty, meaningful conflict, vivid detail and a clear voice.
It’s about writing with intention for the reader, not just the page.

To the reader:

This story isn't just for the poor.

It's for anyone who has ever felt left out, looked past or uncertain of their place in the world.

It's for those who wonder if they belong and need to know they do.

If this story opens your heart, softens your view or helps you take your next brave step

Then it has done what it was meant to do.

And to you, Prof Zabidi

Thank you.

For your grace.

Your trust.

And your patience which for the record, makes you the most patient person on earth...

After my father, of course.

ROSE AZIZ

PREFACE

A Story I Carried in Silence for Years

I didn't begin this journey with the intention of writing a book. It began with a longing deep and wordless to finally be understood.

So I handed her the bones of my story.
Not beauty. Not perfection.
Only fragments of a life I had carried quietly, too long.
And somehow, she found the heartbeat within them.

I didn't expect this process to break me open.
But that is exactly what happened.
Without warning. Without sound.
In an instant.

For years, I kept moving teaching, healing, leading because
silence felt safer than memory.
But memory has its own way.
It creeps in like smoke from a fire you thought had died.

This is not a record of triumphs.
It is a story of becoming.
Of falling and rising.
Of carrying grief with dignity.

It is for anyone who has ever wondered,
"Does my story matter?"
For those who began with little,
but carried hearts larger than their circumstances.
For those who whispered dreams in the dark,
hoping someone, somewhere, might hear them.

If something in these pages lingers with you
if it awakens a memory, softens a wound or reminds you that you
are not alone then this story has found its home. Thank you for
being here.
For listening. For letting a long-held silence finally find its voice.

Zabidi Azhar Hussin
Putrajaya, May 2025

PROLOGUE

Between Screams and Resolve

Screams. Shattered glass.
The acrid scent of metal and smoke.

It wasn't a dream.
It was the beginning of my real life.

There are moments in life that cannot be planned, avoided or forgotten.
Not because they are beautiful
but because they tear us apart and rebuild us into someone new.

That day, under the burning Lemal sky,
I stood frozen by the roadside.
In front of me, a mangled school bus.
Books scattered like brittle leaves.
Voices of villagers crying out in panic.

“There’s a child trapped inside!”

I was just a boy.
Poor. Quiet. Hungry.
But I had dreams.
Each morning, I walked to school with an empty belly and a head full of hopes I never spoke aloud.
I wanted a life where I didn't have to hide my hunger behind a smile.

But that day changed everything.
The world I knew was ripped away in seconds.

I didn't know what I felt.
Fear, yes.
Sadness, of course.
But more than anything
I felt helpless.

And in the middle of that helplessness,
a promise was born inside me.

“I don’t want to just stand here watching. I want to be the one who helps.”

That was the moment I changed.

This book is not a catalogue of victories.
It is a story of falls and rises.
Of loss that gave birth to purpose.
Of how a small boy
who hid old newspaper clippings under his mattress
kept a dream alive when everything else was falling apart.

If you’re looking for a story of effortless success,
this isn’t it.

But if you want to know how a child’s scream can become a call to
purpose,
how a mother’s quiet love can shape the soul of a son,
how one small promise held tight can anchor an entire life
then this is the story.

And it begins here
between the screams and the wail of an ambulance.
On a road stained with dust and blood.
Where the wreckage of a school bus
became the birthplace of a vow.

Not in a university.
Not in a hospital corridor.
But among pain and the kind of hope that refuses to die.

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CHAPTER 1

THE LEMAL TRAGEDY: BY THE TRACKS OF FATE

The Road That Didn't Lead Home

That day, I was cycling home from school like I always did. The sky was sharp and cloudless. The midday sun pressed down hard, soaking the collar of my school uniform with sweat.

The red gravel road was uneven, dust rising with every turn of the wheel. Each pedal stroke strained a little more than the last but I was used to it. No one rode beside me. Just me... and the clinking rhythm of my old bicycle chain echoing into the stillness.

As I passed the turn leading to Pak Din's grocery shop, I noticed a group of adults gathered with unusually tense expressions.

"A school bus just crashed into a train at Lemal!" someone shouted.

I stopped in my tracks. My breath caught.

Without a word, I swung my handle bars, not toward home but straight for the Lemal railway station. Panic flared in my chest. I pedaled harder, faster, legs burning, heart pounding

Every push on the pedals felt heavier than the one before. The road, dry, broken, angry with dust, stung my eyes until they watered. My throat burned, parched from the heat... and from fear.

As I got closer, something strange hit my nose. Smoke. Scorched metal. And something else, something sickening and wrong. A smell that didn't belong to any afternoon I'd ever known.

When I arrived, the world had already unraveled. I skidded to a stop just a few meters away. My heart pounded in my ears. My legs refused to move, rooted, frozen. I tried to swallow but my throat was sand.

Acrid smoke burned my nostrils, scorched iron tangled with the brittle scent of earth left thirsty too long. The air was heavy, as if grief itself hung suspended, still searching for a voice. I turned toward the tracks. And there it was-wreckage, twisted and final. A collision that didn't just break steel. It broke something in the air.

The school bus was no longer a bus. Its frame had been crushed, shoved off the track like a toy kicked aside. The bright yellow paint was buried under soot... and streaks of something darker. Blood. It looked as if a giant hand had flattened it without mercy. The windows? Gone. Just shards of glass glittering on gravel, like winter frost that had lost its way.

The Long-Awaited Dawn : A Memoir of Tragedy, Dreams and the Promise of a Village Child

One scorching afternoon in Lemal, a school bus was hit by a train and caught fire. The bus was destroyed. Many students perished. Others were seriously injured. A young boy stood frozen by the roadside, unable to do anything but watch. Quietly, he made a promise to himself that one day, he would become someone who could help.

That boy was Zabidi. Born in a wooden house in Pasir Mas, he grew up in poverty but was surrounded by ambition. To buy rice, he would collect and sell kampung chicken eggs. He also picked up discarded bottles by the roadside to reuse in the village clinic. Groceries were often bought on credit. And even more, he would climb trees to pick fruits and sell them to help support his family. Yet every morning, he faithfully walked to school in his worn uniform, carrying hope and the belief that one day, his life would change.

The Long Awaited Dawn is not a story of instant success. It is a tale of wounds that teach and promises that are eventually fulfilled. From the village to overseas, from being a doctor to becoming a leader in several higher education institutions, this memoir proves that to bring change, one doesn't need to be perfect. One only needs to be willing.

Professor Dr. Zabidi Azhar Mohd Hussin is a pediatric neurologist, former Dean, Chairman of USAINS at Universiti Sains Malaysia and former Deputy Vice Chancellor at several prestigious universities in Malaysia. He earned his medical degree (MBBS) from the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne and is a Fellow of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (UK). He served in the United Kingdom for 13 years before returning to Malaysia in 1991. He has served as an academic advisor and visiting professor at various international institutions, including in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and the United States.

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