

# **Buried Secrets and Unnoted Sins**

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*A continuation to Buried Secrets. Kodi vows to never love again...but the new addition to the dog team may make him break his vow.*

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**Chapter 1 - Buried Secrets and Unnoted Sins**

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# 1 - Buried Secrets and Unnoted Sins

"Its almost spring again, and I still can hear the news ringing in my ears. He is dead, murdered, killed and once again I am left to fend. Alone, in this frigid tundra. It is hellish, I endure painful days of which I vow vengeance for every moment that passes in which I know I must wait to see him again. Spring is nearing, every moment I can feel it and I wait for that fateful day when I know the deed can be done for I am sure I will never love again." Kodi thought to himself as he passed the alleyway in which his friend, and first love, Kirby was murdered.

The fact of Kodi's secret love for Kirby was known for a long time. Many had moved on, except for Kodi himself, and Kano and Hank, who have been harrassing him ever since the secret was beknownst by everyone in town that day. Those two, once known to be Kodi's close friends, always lived in the past and never let anything go, especially when it came to someone being different. They would also physically hurt Kodi from time to time, but he never comtemplated suicide. He just unofficially promised himself that it was best if he never felt attracted to anyone, male or female, in any way. And that's how he lived. Kodi had often found himself gandering at other dogs unconsciously, but he always shook them off. Many female dogs had expressed their undying love for him, but he always had to respectfully turn them down. It may have been selfish to others, but at this point Kodi didn't care.

He was on better terms with his father now, especially since Balto never wanted to bring up the bad past. Balto had neither accepted nor disowned Kodi for who he was. No matter how much Kodi wanted his father to be proud of him, for anything good he ever did, he knew that he would never be able to look at him the same ever again. Father and son would still visit, but neither would ever mention the night that changed their life. Neither would they tell the other that they loved each other, nor did they know if they even did or not. But both did not want conflict between each other, and that was enough for them.

Kodi's mail team had been extremely slow ever since Kirby's death, probably because most of them were still healing from the shock, but it was more than likly because they lacked one dog for the job. However, one postmaster, named Mr. Carlson, was retiring one morning. Mr. Simpson was hooking his dogs up to the sled when Mr. Carlson approached him from behind. Kodi, who was in the lead, couldn't help but overhear their conversation.

"Again, I am very sorry that wolves killed your lead dog, Simpson." said Carlson, heaving a sigh. Kodi shook his head. Rumors everywhere were degrading his heritage even worse than before. He couldnt believe that no human would ever think that their "loyal servant" the dog, would ever kill. It disgusted Kodi and made him want to throw up, which was a foreign feeling to him.

"It's quite alright," replied Simpson. "It wasn't your fault. All we can do now is just deliver the mail as fast as possible."

"Well, you certainly have an excellent lead dog now," Carlson smiled, patting Kodi's head roughly. Kodi didn't mind how rough the old man pet his head, he intended it to be in a playful way. "You know, since I'm only going to be selling my team, how about I give you my lead dog?" he proposed.

Mr. Simpson's young tan face lit up. "Really, Mr. Carlson?" he exclaimed. "That would be...such an honor!" The two men carried on a conversation about the addition, but at this point Kodi was only disappointed in getting a new recruit. Sure, he had been a newcomer at one time, but he wasn't sure if he could handle the fact that Mr. Simpson could just replace Kirby so easily. The mailteam had been running slower with one less dog, yes, but Kodi had enough on his mind dealing with Kano and Hank giving him trouble about being the lead dog. This new dog was probably going to give him trouble too, and possibly threaten his position as lead dog.

It wasn't long before a deal was made between the two men. They shook hands and Mr. Carlson walked away to fetch his dog from his keep. Mr. Simpson walked up to Kodi and patted his head and said, "Don't worry, boy, you'll still get to be lead dog on this team." Those words gave Kodi a good sense of security and he smiled to himself in pride.

Both of them heard two sets of footsteps drawing nearer and they turned to see who it was. When the source turned the corner from around a building, it was Mr. Carlson and his lead dog. Kodi stared at the dog Mr. Carlson was leading ever-so-closer to him. It was a male brown and tan huskie with a very friendly look displayed on his round face. His build was bulkier than Kodi's, but it looked to be mostly because of the very thick fur all over his charming body. Kodi's gaze slipped into the other huskie's blue eyes and they kept that eye contact for what seemed like years.

Kodi caught himself staring and looked away in a fashion that said that he took back all interest in the other dog, no matter how untrue it was. He could barely admit it to himself that this dog would be just another mere attraction he felt for one other person that would soon fade away in order to keep his promise to himself. But as the dog's leash was being given to Mr. Simpson, Kodi's heart crept further and further up his body.

"I'm sure you remember my Lan," said Mr. Carlson, introducing the dog to Mr. Simpson.

"I do," said Simpson, getting acquainted with Lan with friendly rubs on his back.

"He's very good with other dogs, so he shouldn't be too much trouble for the rest of your team." Carlson explained. "I expect you to take good care of him."

"Yessir, I will!" exclaimed Simpson. The two men exchanged some more words and then said their good-byes, the entire time Kodi was trying to pay no attention to Lan. Mr. Simpson hooked Lan up to the sled, placing him in the spot next to Kodi, and then walked off to load the mail onto the sled. Dusty and Ralph both noticed Kodi's shift in mood when Lan appeared. They exchanged glances and grinned.

"So, what's your name again?" Dusty asked the new huskie.

"My name's Lan." he said with the most charming of voices. "How about all of you?"

"I'm Dusty, this is Ralph," she said, brushing against him in a flirty way. "Back there are Kano and Hank, and our lead dog beside you is Kodi." She had a tone in her voice suggesting that Kodi was a very nice guy. Kodi felt his face burn in embarrassment. He wanted to tell Dusty to shut up right then and there, but he didn't want to embarrass himself even more.

"Kodi, huh?" Lan smiled big. "That short for something?"

"Uh...Kodiak." he said, trying to not make eye contact, but also trying not to be rude.

"That's an interesting name!" Lan replied. He eyed Kodi's body, which made him tense, but feel good. "I bet since you're lead dog, you get the girls too." He winked. "You got a lady interest?" Kano and Hank were heard in the back snickering as loud as they could.

"Um..." Kodi's eyes widened, but just then Mr. Simpson commanded the dogs to run forward, and Kodi followed his orders without haste. The team ran as fast as they could to their first destination. Even though Kodi wanted to do his job well, he couldn't help but want to take his time stopping. He didn't want to talk to Lan or vice versa because frankly he was afraid of falling in love with him.

When the mail team slowed to a halt, the dogs shook off the snow and water from their fur, and Mr. Simpson unloaded the mail from the sled.

Lan took a look at Kodi and gave a sigh. "Hey, Kodi," he started. Kodi looked at him, his voice was alot more sincere now than it was earlier. "I'm sorry if I embarrassed you earlier with that girl question."

"Oh...it's ok." Kodi smiled slightly. "And to answer your question, no, I don't have a lady interest."

"But he does have a manly interest!" Hank guffawed from behind. Kano joined him in the laughter. Dusty and Ralph exchanged a shocking glance. Lan just looked at Kodi, who just sighed in both sorrow an irritation. Lan cocked his head to the side, still looking at Kodi. Still hearing the two dogs in the back laughing with all their might, Lan turned his head back to them.

"Hey! There's nothing wrong with that," Lan spat at them. Kodi whipped his head to face him. He couldn't believe that someone was sticking up for him. "So zip yer lips!" Kano and Hank just grinned and scoffed at him. Lan turned back to face Kodi and wnked at him. Kodi smiled and hoped that maybe loving someone again wouldn't cause anymore regret in his life.

The mail team returned to Nome before dusk, and by that time Kodi and Lan grew to like each other very much. Both were amazed and glad it didn't take long for them to hit it off. Kodi found many things out about Lan. That he had never had any sort of relationship with anyone and was a mail dog to the core. And like Kodi, Lan was not very attracted to either gender.

Mr. Simpson unleashed his dogs and fed them some cold raw meat. After being fed, Dusty, Ralph, Kodi, and Lan made their way to the boiler room, having conversation along the way.

"Ugh, I hate spring," complained Dusty.

"How come, Dust?" Ralph asked.

"Because of the snow!" she exclaimed. "The snow gets so soft, you wont believe how many holes I tripped in today."

"Well, be thankful we didn't have to go through any mountains today," said Kodi. "We would've run into

an avalanche for sure or the snow beneath our feet would've gave way."

"I think Kodi's trying to say that holes are the least of our worries." Lan chuckled.

Many dogs were stuffed into the boiler room that night, making it uncomfortably warm inside. Kodi found it hard enough to sleep already because he was trapped inside his own mind with his thoughts, and he couldn't stop thinking about Kirby. Such thoughts had kept him up at night before, but that was much closer to after Kirby's death. He decided to leave the warm room to the other dogs and walk outside to cope with his thoughts.

He wondered why Kirby was haunting his thoughts on that night of all nights. What could it mean? That Kodi should try to love again? That he should move on and love Lan? That Kodi should remain faithful to Kirby and not love anyone? Or could it mean that he should keep what happened to Kirby in mind and not love Lan or any male for that matter? Kodi knew that there was no girl for him here, and he doubted there would be anywhere. Kodi felt nothing with the girl dogs of Nome, but he felt something with Lan, the same way he felt with Kirby. Should he love Lan, he would not let what happened to Kirby happen to Lan. But the question is, would Lan love him? That question's answer was no contest. Kodi somehow grew to know that Lan wouldn't ever love him.

Kodi heaved a sigh, and then found himself at the foot of the hill just outside of Nome. He figured it wouldn't hurt to sit atop it for a bit to stare at the moon. He made his way up the hill and spotted some broken bottles emerging from the melting snow. Just then he wished that he had a light source so that he could see that beautiful trick with the aurora his father taught him. He remembered that it was very calming to see, and tranquility was just what he needed at the moment.

"Kodi?"

Kodi turned to where his name was being called from. It was Lan walking up the hill with a concerned look on his face.

"Oh...Hey, Lan." Kodi greeted, still unsure about his feelings.

"What are you doing up here?" Lan asked. "You get kicked out by Kano and Hank or something?"

"Something like that," Kodi said trying to smile. There was a moment of silence.

"Eh...it's nicer out here anyway." Lan said, stretching. "Not all cramped."

Kodi could tell that Lan didn't like being quiet or holding still for too long, but he just wanted to enjoy his company silently. Just then a bright light from someone's house was lit. Kodi looked over to the light, to the broken bottles, then to Lan. Kodi stood up from his sitting position and tinkered with the broken bottles on the ground and moved the snow away from them. Lan looked at Kodi and walked towards him.

"Uh...what are you doing?" he asked. "You better be careful, those are broken bottles, they'll cut you."

"They're ice caps," Kodi whispered. He looked to the light coming from the house. "And that's the sun."

Lan laughed. "You're a strange one, alright."

Kodi smirked at him and moved away from the bottles. The light from the house shined a little onto the broken bottles and reflected beautiful colors into the air. The blues and reds mixed together into what looked like the northern lights. Kodi could hear Lan gasp slightly in amazement and he smiled to himself.

"Wow...that's incredible..." Lan whispered. He looked at Kodi looking at the lights, which were reflecting dazzling hues into them. "It's even more incredible in your eyes..."

Kodi looked at Lan and smiled. It was such a nice thing of him to say and he was then thankful that he could show this sight to Lan. He was happy that he could show another that he truly cared about the trick that his father showed his mother. And for a moment, he dared to speak his mind about Lan.

"I...wanted to show Kirby this...before he died..." Kodi didn't need to continue with that subject. Lan sadly knew that Kodi never got the chance to. "I just wanted to show someone I truly cared about...whether or not they cared about me."

Lan then realized that Kodi wanted him. He smirked to himself and placed his paw upon Kodi's. "You're not gonna make me have to say it for you are you?" The two smiled to each other. Lan leaned in close to Kodi's face and Kodi finished the bond with a soft lick on Lan's face. Lan pushed his body into Kodi's, almost as if in a hurry, and they landed roughly on the ground. They made love that night atop the hill, under the northern lights, and it was the happiest Kodi had been in a long while.

Kodi hadn't thought about Kirby at all the next morning because he was too busy daydreaming about Lan and the night before. He was always found staring off into space with a big childish grin displayed. He hadn't seen Lan at all that morning and couldn't wait until he did. He was starting to miss him terribly.

While Kodi was waiting for Mr. Simpson to hook him up to the sled, Balto was walking towards him with a very pleased look on his face. Kodi wagged his tail at the sight of his father. It had been a while since he last seen him. They greeted each other.

"You're looking mighty happy this morning," Balto teased.

"I am, Dad." Kodi replied. "And I feel great. I can't wait to get back from the mail run today." Kodi danced around a little bit, like an impatient pup waiting for a favorite toy to be thrown.

"Your run hasn't even started and you're already anxious to get back?" Balto questioned. "I don't know what you've been doing lately...but I guess as long as you're happy..." The older dog smiled, though a bit confused, and departed.

Kodi decided not to tell him about his new love with Lan. He figured his father didn't need to know. But after thinking about Lan, he wondered where he was. After Mr. Simpson hooked Kodi up to the sled was when Lan finally arrived. He looked very proud of himself for some reason, so as Simpson hooked him up to the spot behind Kodi, he asked what was going on.

"Nothing's going on," Lan replied, chuckling. Kodi was a little baffled, but still couldn't help but tease Lan

discreetly by rubbing his chin with his tail. Lan pulled away, which was not what Kodi was expecting. Lan didn't say anything, but Kano and Hank were heard snickering in the back. Kodi couldn't help but notice that the two dogs were laughing at him. He wondered why and if it had anything to do with Lan. He didn't think so, because Lan didn't like them.

Dusty noticed the confused look on her friend's face and stared at him until he noticed her staring. Kodi looked at her, then shrugged in a way that said, "I don't know." Then Mr. Simpson gave the command to run.

The mailrun was about halfway over with around noon, which was also the time the team had to cross through the mountains. The mountain they were on was completely naked of trees and only held a few bushes. With the face of the mountain completely bared to the sun, it was making the snow extremely soft and difficult to run on. The team was running downhill also, and their worst fear became reality when snow fell from under Hank and he tumbled, making the entire team lose it's balance and have to keep running in order to not fall head over heels all the way down the mountain. Hank was getting tied up into his harness and Mr. Simpson was having major difficulties trying to get the team to slow down and stop so that the poor dog could regain his balance. By the time the team slowed to a stop, Hank lay there, tangled in his ropes, motionless.

Mr. Simpson gasped at the sight and quickly ran to the dog and quickly untied the ropes. He pat the still dog, trying to coax some movement, the entire time the team stood still staring at the event wide-eyed. It seemed like hours before Hank came to and was able to stand. He hadn't died, which Mr. Simpson was very thankful for, and was merely shocked from the lack of oxygen and the tumble. Mr. Simpson hooked Hank back up to the sled and the whole situation was brushed off by everyone, except for Kodi.

Kodi didn't know exactly why, but he was very disappointed that Hank lived. Then he would've finally gotten what was coming to him for killing Kirby and making Kodi's life a living hell. Kodi couldn't believe that he was making such foreign wishes, so he tried to shake it off and keep continuing his run like nothing happened.

The team made it back to Nome later than planned, but the fact that they survived running down the mountain was reason enough to arrive late. After the dogs were unhooked and fed, Lan wandered off to the boiler room and Kodi followed soon after. When Kodi entered the boiler room, one female dog was exiting. He didn't know who she was, but she had a very nice build and strutted like she was the most beautiful thing on the planet. Kodi brushed off her ignorant attitude and approached Lan, who was laying in front of the heater with his eyes closed.

Kodi knew that he wasn't asleep, so he layed down next to him and licked his ear. Lan looked up at Kodi and smiled, but didn't do anything. Kodi kept licking parts of his body, but Lan still failed to move. He obviously wasn't in the mood for play.

"Well, you sure know how to make a hint," Kodi said, somewhat sad.

"I'm tired is all," Lan said, yawning, then falling asleep for the night. Kodi didn't know why Lan was acting like this all of a sudden. He hoped that he didn't anger him in some way, but he really didn't see what he did wrong. Kodi just layed on the opposite side of the room and tried falling asleep himself.

The next morning Kodi found himself to be alone in the boiler room. He was upset that Lan wasn't around to talk to, he wanted to tell him that he was upset with how he was acting and wanted to be comforted. It wasn't long before Lan entered the room, but he wasn't alone either. He was walking side by side with the girl dog Kodi had seen leave the boiler room the previous night. Kodi hoped that it didn't mean what he thought it meant. Kodi stood on all fours and faced the two. The girl dog eyed Kodi in an unimpressed manner, but then Lan turned to her and asked her to leave for a moment. She listened and left the room.

"Lan...why were you...?" Kodi was choked up and couldn't get the question out. He was very shocked and hoped that there was a very reasonable explanation as to why Lan was with that girl.

"Okay, Kodi, I know what you're thinking," Lan started. "And I'm not going to lie to you...it's what's going on. I'm with her...for now." Lan said matter of factly with a tiny smirk on his lips.

"But I thought we were--" Kodi shooked his head. "I showed you the northern lights...and we..."

"Kodi...it meant nothing." he said sternly. "Whatever you were feeling, it was a lie. And what I told you about me never having a relationship with anyone, that was a lie too. Putting it bluntly, I was just using you."

"Why?" Kodi exclaimed, suddently feeling selfish. He marched up to Lan and looked him straight into his blue eyes. "Why did you use me of all people!"

Lan stared at him, trying to read what Kodi planned to do next. But he stayed honest. "You were the only gullible one I could get ahold of at the time. I would've had you again last night, but frankly...you didn't match up to my standards."

Kodi's heart fell. He didn't know what to do next. He didn't know if he should have started sobbing right there because of how bad his feelings were hurt or attacked him because of the vicious animal welling up inside of himself. But he couldn't bring himself to do either of those things. So he bolted out of the room. He regretted it, knowing that he made Lan aware of what a coward he was. He also regretted letting his tears fall, making himself aware of how weak-minded he was.

He couldn't believe that he let himself get played. He should not have let his feelings get in the way of reality. He knew deep down that he was never going to find a love like Kirby's ever again. Knowing that, he also knew that realistically he would never love again and that he should have kept his promise to himself. Somehow he couldn't help but blame only himself.

As he ran through the town, he heard the voices of Kano and Hank yelling out how he never deserved to love or be loved at all. He heard Dusty and Ralph call out to him too, but his own thoughts drowned out whatever they had to say. No matter what it was, he didn't want to let those who wouldn't be there for him get to him in any way. He was angry, sad, depressed, and confused. He could not stop thinking.

He kept saying to himself, "Kodi, you're stupid! How could you think that you deserved love other than Kirby's! How could you think that you even deserved Kirby's love! Kirby's dead because of you and no one else! He's dead because of you!" Those hurtful words played throughout his head over and over again and every time he let more tears cascade down his face and fly into the air. He left the tears



behind, just like he left everything else before.

Kodi found himself towering over a gorge with a skinny little river at the very bottom. He stared at the gorge for a few minutes and looked up at the sun that loomed at its highest peak in the sky. The brightness of that miracle-giving orb made Kodi's eyes water with both pain and glee. He fixed his gaze down upon the bottom of the gorge, not even looking at the river, but at the jagged rocks leading it to its end. He smiled. Kodi felt the ground beneath his feet shift, but he didn't bother to move, nor think if he would've had time to jump away from the gorge wall before it brought him down to the cold depths.

Months passed since Kodi's death and not once did anybody think that Kodi had committed suicide. Nobody knew for sure, but they felt that they didn't doubt Kodi. Many were happy that Kodi could be reunited with Kirby. Many still mourned for him. Many forgot about him. Many cursed him. But no matter what they all felt about the death of Kodiak, his sin was kept unnoted.