

Whispers Beneath the Jacaranda

Whispers Beneath the Jacaranda

Prince Matthew

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Whispers Beneath the Jacaranda

Dedication

To the quiet hearts who love deeply and wait patiently. May your whispers be heard, even beneath the silence of jacaranda blooms. And to Ntinda, where memory and imagination first danced. This story is rooted in your soil.

To my family and friends. May you draw lessons from this journal.

Acknowledgements

This story would not have bloomed without the love, support, and quiet strength of those who have walked beside me. To my mother, Naluyima Joyce, your unwavering faith and gentle wisdom have been the roots of everything I create. You are the first whisper beneath every jacaranda. To my siblings; Monica, Pamela, Odoi, Jayden, and Tyler—thank you for being my first companions in storytelling, laughter, and resilience. Your presence is woven into every page. To Nalugwa Irene Ryn and Medsh .J. Wincer your encouragement and belief in my vision gave me courage when I needed it most. You reminded me that stories matter. To my dear friends; Bosco, Sylvester, Hubala, Tabo, and Titus—thank you for the late-night conversations, the shared dreams, and the quiet moments that shaped this journey. Your friendship is a light I carry with me. This book is not mine alone, it is a tapestry of voices, memories, and love. I am deeply grateful.

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“Love is not the thunder it is the hush before the rain, the glance that lingers, the promise never spoken.”

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Introduction

In the shade of jacaranda trees, where blossoms fall like memories and silence speaks louder than words, this story unfolds. *Whispers Beneath the Jacaranda* is not merely a tale of romance—it is a meditation on yearning, resilience, and the quiet power of love that endures across time and tradition.

Set in the heart of Uganda, where culture and emotion intertwine, this novel invites you into a world where every glance carries weight, every silence holds meaning, and every character is shaped by the landscapes they inhabit, both physical and emotional.

This is a story for those who have loved in silence, hoped in stillness, and found beauty in the spaces between words. It is for the dreamers, the believers, and the ones who carry love like a secret flame.

Welcome to a journey of tenderness, truth, and transformation.

CHAPTER ONE

The First Glance

The late afternoon sun spilled its golden warmth over Makindye, painting the rooftops in hues of amber and rose. The air was thick with the scent of charcoal smoke, fried cassava, and the faint perfume of jacaranda blossoms drifting from the tree-lined streets. It was the kind of day that felt like a memory even as it unfolded—slow, tender, and full of promise.

Matthew stood at the edge of the community center's courtyard, his fingers nervously adjusting the cuffs of his linen shirt. He had chosen it carefully—white, crisp, with a subtle embroidery along the collar that his mother had stitched years ago. It was the shirt he wore when he wanted to feel like his best self. Tonight, he needed that feeling.

The courtyard was alive with celebration. Strings of woven lanterns hung from the trees, swaying gently in the breeze. Children darted between tables, their laughter rising like birdsong. Aunties in brightly colored gomesis bustled

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about, balancing trays of samosas and passion juice, while uncles gathered in clusters, debating politics and football with equal passion. The rhythm of drums pulsed in the background, blending with the hum of conversation and the occasional burst of laughter.

It was his cousin Daniel's engagement party—a grand affair that had drawn family from as far as Gulu and Mbarara. The venue had been transformed into a garden of light and sound, with vines trailing from the rafters and baskets of marigolds lining the walkways. But Matthew wasn't here for the food or the music. He was here because of a rumor, whispered by his sister with a knowing smile: Amina will be there.

Amina Nayiruba. The name alone stirred something in him—like the first notes of a favorite song. He had seen her once, months ago, at a book launch in Kampala. She had stood at the front of the room, reading a poem about mangoes and longing, her voice soft but sure, her words weaving through the crowd like silk. Matthew hadn't spoken to her that night. He hadn't needed to. Her poem had spoken to him.

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He remembered the line that had st”yed with him: “The mango ripens in silence, but its sweetness is heard in every bite.” It was a metaphor, yes—but it had felt like a message. Something about patience, about hidden beauty, about love that doesn’t announce itself but waits to be discovered.

Now, as he stepped into the hall, the sounds of celebration wrapped around him—drums, laughter, the clink of glasses. He moved slowly, scanning the crowd, his heart thudding with anticipation. And then, he saw her.

She stood by the buffet table, her back to him, her head tilted in laughter. Her dress was a deep shade of emerald, hugging her figure with effortless grace. Her hair was braided and pinned with tiny golden beads that caught the light like stars. As she turned, her eyes met his—dark, curious, and full of something he couldn’t name.

She smiled.

It wasn’t a wide smile, nor a coy one. It was the kind of smile that felt like a door opening. Matthew felt his breath catch, and for a moment, the noise around him faded. There was only her.

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He hesitated, then walked toward her, weaving through the crowd with a calm he didn't feel. As he reached the table, she looked up again, her gaze steady.

“Hi,” he said, his voice low.

“Hi,” she replied, her smile deepening.

“I'm Matthew,” he offered, suddenly aware of how ordinary his name sounded next to hers.

“I know,” she said, surprising him. “You were at the poetry reading. You asked the question about metaphors and mangoes.”

He laughed, a little embarrassed. “I didn't think you'd remember.”

“I remember everything that matters,” she said, reaching for a bottle of water.

They stood there, talking—about books, about teaching, about the strange beauty of Kampala traffic at sunset. She told him about her students, how they wrote poems about boda bodas and heartbreak, how she believed every child had a story worth telling. He told her about his work

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in community development, how he wanted to build spaces where people felt seen.

Time folded around them, soft and forgiving. The party continued, but they were in their own world now, built from words and glances and the quiet thrill of possibility. At one point, a slow song began to play—a blend of traditional drums and soft guitar. Couples drifted to the center of the hall, swaying gently. Matthew hesitated, then extended his hand.

“Would you dance with me?”

Amina looked at him for a moment, then placed her hand in his. Her fingers were warm, her touch light. They moved together, slowly, the music wrapping around them like a whisper. He could feel her heartbeat through her palm, steady and strong.

Later, as the lanterns flickered and the music slowed, Matthew walked her to the gate. The jacaranda tree above them rustled gently, its blossoms falling like confetti.

“Will I see you again?” he asked, his voice barely above a whisper.

Amina looked up at him, her eyes reflecting the starlight. “You already are.”

CHAPTER TWO

Echoes of a Beginning

The morning after the engagement party, Kampala woke slowly. The city stretched beneath a pale sky, its streets still damp from the night’s rain. Vendors arranged their stalls with sleepy precision, and the hum of life began to rise—matatus honking, radios crackling, and the scent of chapati sizzling on roadside pans.

Matthew sat on the veranda of his modest apartment in Bukoto, a steaming cup of spiced tea in his hands. The jacaranda blossoms from the night before still clung to his memory, vivid and fragrant. He hadn’t slept much. Every time he closed his eyes, he saw Amina’s smile, heard her voice, felt the warmth of her hand in his.

He replayed their conversation over and over. Her words had a rhythm, a quiet confidence that lingered. She had spoken about her students with such passion, about poetry as a form of

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healing. Matthew had listened, captivated—not just by her intellect, but by the way she made the world feel softer, more deliberate.

He reached for his phone, thumb hovering over her contact. Daniel had sent it to him late last night with a teasing message: “Don’t mess this up, cousin.”

But Matthew hesitated. What would he say? Good morning felt too casual. I can’t stop thinking about you felt too much. He settled for something in between.

“Yesterday was beautiful. I hope your morning is too.”

He hit send, then stared at the screen, heart thudding. Minutes passed. Then, a reply.

“It is now. Thank you, Matthew.”

He smiled, a quiet, private smile that felt like sunlight breaking through clouds.

Later that day, Matthew found himself walking through Owino Market, the chaos of color and sound grounding him. He needed to clear his head, to remind himself that life was still

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ordinary, still full of noise and dust and bargaining. But even here, among the shouting vendors and crowded alleys, he thought of her.

He passed a stall selling books—secondhand novels stacked like bricks. One caught his eye: *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran. Amina had mentioned it last night, quoting a line about love and freedom. He picked it up, thumbed through the pages, and bought it without bargaining.

That evening, he texted her again.

“Found something that reminded me of you. Would you like to meet for coffee tomorrow?”

Her reply came quickly.

“Only if you bring the book.”

They met at a quiet café tucked behind a row of jacaranda trees in Kololo. The place smelled of cinnamon and old wood, with mismatched chairs and faded art on the walls. It was the kind of place where time slowed down, where conversations felt like confessions.

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Amina arrived wearing a mustard-yellow dress and a denim jacket. Her hair was tied back, her eyes bright. She greeted him with a hug—brief, warm, grounding.

They sat by the window, sipping spiced coffee and sharing stories. Matthew told her about his childhood in Jinja, about climbing mango trees and skipping stones across the Nile. Amina spoke of her grandmother, who had taught her to read using old newspapers and lullabies.

They read passages from *The Prophet*, pausing to reflect, to argue gently, to laugh. At one point, Amina leaned forward, her voice low.

“Do you believe love should be free? That it shouldn’t bind or possess?”

Matthew considered this. “I think love should be chosen every day. Not because it’s easy, but because it’s worth it.”

She smiled, and he felt something shift—like a door opening deeper inside him.

As they left the café, the sky darkened. Rain began to fall—soft, steady, cleansing.

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Amina laughed and pulled him under the awning of a nearby shop.

“Do you mind getting wet?” she asked.

“Not if it’s with you.”

They stepped into the rain, walking slowly, their hands brushing occasionally. The city blurred around them—lights shimmering, puddles forming, the scent of earth rising.

They didn’t speak much. They didn’t need to. The silence between them was full—of questions, of answers, of something beginning.

When they reached her gate, she turned to him.

“Thank you,” she said. “For today. For listening.”

“I’d do it again,” he replied.

She hesitated, then leaned in and kissed his cheek—soft, deliberate, lingering.

“Goodnight, Matthew.”

And with that, she disappeared behind the gate, leaving him standing in the rain, heart full, soul stirred.

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That night, Matthew didn't sleep. He didn't need to. He had begun dreaming with his eyes open.

CHAPTER THREE

The Weight of Silence

The days that followed their walk in the rain unfolded like verses in a slow-burning poem. Matthew and Amina began to orbit each other more closely—texts turned into calls, calls into long walks, and long walks into evenings spent on her veranda, sipping hibiscus tea and watching the city breathe.

Amina's home in Ntinda was modest but full of soul. The walls were lined with books, framed photographs of her family, and handwoven baskets from her grandmother's village in Mbale. There was a quiet rhythm to her space, a kind of sanctuary that made Matthew feel both welcome and slightly unworthy.

One evening, as the sun dipped behind the hills, casting the sky in hues of burnt orange and lavender, Amina asked him a question that lingered.

“What are you afraid of, Matthew?”

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He paused, fingers tracing the rim of his cup. “Disappointment,” he said. “Not in others. In myself.”

She nodded, as if she understood more than she let on. “I fear forgetting,” she said softly. “Forgetting who I was before the world told me who I should be.”

A week later, they took a trip to Jinja—Matthew’s hometown. He wanted to show her the Nile, the mango trees he used to climb, the old railway bridge where he once carved his name. The drive was quiet, filled with music and shared glances.

In Jinja, everything felt slower. The air was thick with nostalgia. They visited his childhood home, now occupied by distant relatives. The garden was overgrown, but the guava tree still stood tall.

He showed her the riverbank where he used to sit and sketch. “I thought I’d be an artist,” he confessed. “But life had other plans.”

Amina smiled. “You still are. Just in a different medium.”

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They sat by the Nile, watching fishermen cast their nets as the sun shimmered on the water. Amina grew quiet, her gaze distant.

“My father used to bring me here,” she said. “Before he left.”

Matthew turned to her, sensing the shift. “You’ve never mentioned him.”

She hesitated. “He was a poet. A dreamer. But he couldn’t stay. He said the world was too heavy for him.”

There was pain in her voice, but also acceptance. “I used to wait for him. Every Sunday. I’d sit by the gate with a book, hoping he’d come back.”

Matthew reached for her hand. “Did he?”

She shook her head. “Not once.”

Their bond deepened, but so did the tension. One evening, Matthew arrived late to a poetry reading Amina had organized. She had invited him weeks ago, excited to share her world. But he had been caught up in work, distracted, and forgot until the last minute.

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When he arrived, the event was nearly over. Amina stood at the back, arms crossed, her expression unreadable.

“I’m sorry,” he said, breathless. “I lost track of time.”

She didn’t respond immediately. Then, quietly: “You didn’t lose track. You chose something else.”

The words stung. He tried to explain, to apologize, but she was already walking away. That night, he sent her a message.

“I failed you. Not just tonight. I failed to see how much this meant. I’m sorry.”

She didn’t reply.

Days passed. The silence grew. Matthew felt it like a weight on his chest. He went to the café in Kololo, hoping she’d appear. He reread *The Prophet*, searching for wisdom. He even returned to the jacaranda tree where they first met, watching the blossoms fall like memories.

Finally, he wrote her a letter. Not a text. Not an email. A real letter, with ink and paper.

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Dear Amina.

*I don't know how to fix what I broke. But I know I want to try.
You once said poetry is healing. So here is mine: I met you
beneath a sky of falling petals. Where silence spoke louder than
words. You taught me that love is not possession. But presence. I
wasn't present when it mattered. But I am here now.*

Yours.

Matthew

He left the letter at her gate, unsure if she'd read it.

Three days later, she called.

"I read your letter," she said.

He held his breath.

"And I cried."

They met at the café again. This time, there were no books, no poetry. Just two people, stripped of pretense.

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“I was hurt,” she said. “Not because you were late. But because I thought you didn’t see me.”

“I do,” he said. “More than ever.”

She reached across the table, took his hand. “Then let’s begin again.

They walked through the city that night, hand in hand. The jacaranda trees were blooming again, as if the world had waited for them.

And beneath the blossoms, they whispered not promises, but truths.

Not forever, but today.

Not perfection, but presence.

CHAPTER FOUR

When Shadows Return

The rains had eased, and Kampala was bathed in golden light. The city felt renewed—streets washed clean, jacaranda petals scattered like confetti. Matthew and Amina had found their rhythm again. Their days were filled with laughter, shared meals, and quiet moments that felt like home.

But peace, as always, is a fragile thing.

“Hey stranger. I’m in town. Coffee?”

Ryn

Matthew stared at the name on his screen, heart skipping. Ryn. The girl who had once turned his world upside down. The girl who had left without goodbye. The girl he had never quite stopped wondering about.

They had met years ago in Nairobi, during a photography workshop. Ryn was bold, unpredictable, and intoxicating. She had a laugh that made people turn, and a way of looking at

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you that made you feel seen—and exposed. Their connection had been intense, but short-lived. She had vanished one morning, leaving behind only a polaroid and a note: “Don’t wait for me.” And now, she was back.

Matthew agreed to meet her. He told himself it was closure. Curiosity. Nothing more. They met at a rooftop bar in Kisementi, the city sprawling beneath them. Ryn looked the same—wild curls, silver rings, eyes that danced with mischief.

“You look... grounded,” she said, sipping her cocktail.

“I am,” he replied. “Life’s different now.”

She leaned in. “Is it happy?”

He hesitated. “It’s becoming.”

Ryn smiled. “I missed you, you know.”

Amina noticed the shift immediately. Matthew had grown distant—still kind, still present, but quieter. His eyes wandered more. His phone buzzed late at night. He laughed less.

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One evening, as they sat watching the sunset from her veranda, she asked, “Is something pulling you away?”

Matthew looked at her, guilt flickering. “Someone from my past came back. Ryn.”

Amina’s face remained calm, but her fingers tightened around her cup. “And what does she want?”

“I don’t know,” he said. “But I met her.”

Amina nodded slowly. “And did you tell her about me?”

Matthew looked down. “Not yet.”

The silence between them was heavy.

Ryn was relentless. She sent photos, memories, invitations. She reminded Matthew of who he used to be—reckless, creative, unbound. She spoke of travel, of art shows in Zanzibar, of a life without roots.

“You’ve become too safe,” she teased. “Don’t you miss the fire?”

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Matthew was torn. Amina offered depth, stability, and truth. Ryn offered chaos, passion, and escape. One night, Ryn kissed him. He didn't stop her. But he didn't kiss back.

Amina found out. Not from Matthew—but from Daniel, who had seen Ryn and Matthew together. She waited for Matthew at the jacaranda tree, the one where it all began. When he arrived, she didn't speak. She handed him a book—The Prophet, the one they had shared. Inside was a note.

“Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself.” Kahlil Gibran

She looked at him, eyes full of pain. “Did you forget what we were building?”

“I didn't,” he said. “But I got lost.”

She nodded. “Then find your way. But not with me.”

She turned and walked away, leaving him beneath the blossoms, alone.

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Days passed. Ryn tried to pull him closer, but Matthew felt hollow. He realized that her world—though thrilling—was not his anymore.

He went to Amina's gate. Left a letter. No reply.

He tried again. Still silence.

Then, one morning, he received a message.

“Meet me at the river.”

It was Amina.

They met at the Nile, where it all began. The water shimmered, the air thick with memory.

“I needed time,” Amina said. “Not to forgive you. But to remember myself.”

Matthew nodded. “I don't want Ryn. I want you. But I understand if that's not enough.”

Amina looked at him. “It's not about wanting. It's about choosing. Every day.”

She paused. “So choose. Not with words. With actions.”

CHAPTER FIVE

The Breaking Point

The days after the river meeting were quiet. Amina had opened a door, but she hadn't stepped through it. She waited—not for Matthew's words, but for his actions. She wanted to see if he could choose her, not just in moments of regret, but in the everyday rhythm of life. But Matthew was drifting.

Ryn had woven herself back into his world with ease. She was everywhere—at art galleries, in group chats, even showing up at Daniel's birthday party uninvited. She laughed loudly, touched Matthew's arm often, and spoke of dreams that felt like escape routes.

Matthew tried to resist. He told himself it was nostalgia, not love. But nostalgia is a powerful drug.

One evening, Ryn invited him to a private exhibition she was curating. "Come see what I've built," she said. "I want you to be part of it."

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He went. The gallery was dimly lit, filled with abstract pieces that screamed emotion. Ryn stood in the center, radiant, confident.

She pulled him into a quiet corner, away from the crowd.

“I still know you,” she whispered. “The real you. The one who doesn’t play safe.”

And then, she kissed him.

This time, he kissed back.

It wasn’t just a kiss. It became a night. A moment that turned into hours. A mistake that became a choice. Matthew woke up in Ryn’s apartment, disoriented and ashamed. He left before sunrise, heart pounding, guilt clawing at his chest. He didn’t tell Amina. But Kampala is small. And secrets don’t stay buried.

Amina finds out everything. It was a friend of hers—Lydia—who saw them. Ryn and Matthew, holding hands outside a bookstore. Lydia didn’t hesitate. She called Amina.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “But you need to know.”

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Amina didn't cry. She didn't scream. She simply packed a bag. She left a note on Matthew's doorstep.

Matthew,

You chose her. Not once. Not by accident. But fully. I won't compete with a memory. I won't beg for love. I gave you my truth. You gave me your silence. I'm leaving. Not because I stopped loving you. But because I started loving myself more.

Amina

Matthew returned home to find the note. Her handwriting was steady, graceful, final. He called her. No answer. He went to her house. The gate was locked.

He messaged her. Nothing. Days turned into weeks. Ryn tried to pull him closer, but he was distant. Hollow. He had gotten what he thought he wanted—and lost what he truly needed. Daniel confronted him. “You had gold, bro. And you traded it for glitter.” Matthew didn't respond. He couldn't.

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Amina moved to Mbale, to her grandmother's village. She began teaching poetry to young girls, helping them find their voices. She walked through fields in the morning, wrote by candlelight at night, and slowly began to heal. She didn't block Matthew. But she didn't reach out either. She was rebuilding.

One evening, Matthew sat beneath the jacaranda tree alone. The blossoms fell around him, soft and indifferent. He opened *The Prophet* again, the pages worn, the spine cracked. "Love knows not its own depth until the hour of separation." He closed the book, tears in his eyes. He had learned the depth. Too late.

CHAPTER SIX

The Road to Redemption

The jacaranda blossoms had begun to fade. Their vibrant purple now dulled, scattered across the pavement like forgotten promises. Kampala moved on, as cities do. But Matthew couldn't.

He had spent weeks in a fog—going through motions, ignoring calls, avoiding Ryn, who had grown cold and distant herself. Their flame had burned fast and left ash.

One morning, Matthew woke before dawn. The city was quiet, the sky still ink-dark. He sat on his balcony, staring at the horizon.

And he whispered aloud:

“I lost her.”

Not just Amina. He had lost the version of himself that she had helped him discover—the man who listened, who dreamed, who loved with intention.

Matthew packed a small bag. He left his camera, his sketchbooks, his phone. He took only The Prophet and the letter Amina had written.

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He went to Lydia first.

“She’s in Mbale,” she said. “With her grandmother. But she doesn’t want to be found.”

“I need to try,” he replied.

The bus ride was long, winding through hills and valleys, past sugarcane fields and red-earth roads. Matthew watched the landscape blur, memories rising with every mile.

He remembered Amina’s laugh, her quiet strength, the way she used silence like a brushstroke. He remembered the poetry readings, the river, the rain. And he remembered the night he betrayed her.

Mbale was quiet, nestled beneath Mount Elgon’s shadow. The air was cooler, the pace slower. Matthew asked around—at the market, the school, the church. Most people knew Amina’s grandmother, Mama Naka. But Amina herself? “She left last week,” one woman said. “Went to Tororo, I think. Something about a workshop.”

Matthew felt his heart sink. He had come all this way, and she was gone again. He found

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her grandmother's house—a small, sun-warmed home with a garden full of hibiscus and marigold. Mama Naka sat on the veranda, shelling groundnuts.

She looked up as he approached. Her eyes were sharp, knowing.

“You're the one who broke her,” she said.

Matthew bowed his head. “Yes.”

She gestured for him to sit. “And now you want to fix her?”

“I want to apologize. I want to tell her I've changed.”

Mama Naka nodded slowly. “Change is not a word. It's a walk. And you've only just begun.”

She handed him a cup of tea. “She's not here. But she left something.”

Mama Naka gave him a folded piece of paper. Amina's handwriting.

Matthew,

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If you're reading this, it means you came. That matters. But I'm not ready to see you. Not yet. I'm healing. I'm growing. I'm learning to love myself without needing someone to reflect it back. I don't hate you. I never did. But forgiveness is not a door you can knock on—it's a garden you must tend. I hope you're tending yours.

Amina

Matthew read the letter three times. Each word felt like a balm and a blade.

He stayed in Mbale for two days. He walked the hills, visited the school where she had taught, sat by the river she had once described. He didn't find her. But he found something else.

Back in Kampala, Matthew began to rebuild. He volunteered at a youth center, teaching photography. He wrote letters to Amina he never sent. He stopped chasing Ryn, who had already moved on to another city, another story. He planted a jacaranda tree outside his apartment. And every morning, he sat beneath it, waiting—not for Amina, but for the man he was becoming.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Tears That Fell Too Late.

The jacaranda tree outside Matthew's apartment had begun to bloom again—soft purple petals fluttering in the breeze, a quiet reminder of beginnings and endings.

Matthew sat beneath it, sketching the outline of a face he couldn't forget. Amina's. Her eyes, her smile, the curve of her jaw. He hadn't seen her in months, but she lived in every line he drew.

His phone buzzed.

Ryn.

He stared at the screen. Her name felt distant now, like a chapter he'd already closed. But something told him to answer the call.

Her voice was trembling.

“Matthew... I need to talk.”

He could hear her crying—deep, guttural sobs that came from somewhere raw.

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“I thought you loved me,” she said. “I thought I was enough.”

Matthew closed his sketchbook, heart heavy.

“Ryn... I cared about you. But I never loved you the way I loved Amina.”

Silence.

“Then why did you come back to me?” she asked.

“Because I was lost. And you were familiar. But comfort isn’t love.”

She cried harder. “I gave you everything. I left Nairobi for you. I built a life around you.”

Matthew’s voice was steady, but kind. “I’m sorry. Truly. But you deserve someone who chooses you fully. Not someone who’s chasing someone else.”

Ryn’s voice cracked. “So what now? You just leave me here?”

Matthew sighed. “I think you need to go back home. To Nairobi. To your art. To yourself.”

She didn’t respond.

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“You’re strong, Ryn. You don’t need me to be whole.”

There was a long pause. Then, quietly:

“Goodbye, Matthew.”

The call ended.

Matthew sat in silence, the weight of her pain pressing against his chest. But he knew he had done the right thing. He had finally spoken the truth.

Matthew returned to his routine—but everything was now infused with purpose. He asked Daniel to help him track down Amina’s poetry workshop in Tororo. He reached out to Lydia again. He even messaged Mama Naka, who replied:

“She’s moving. Slowly. But she’s not ready yet.”

He didn’t push. He waited.

He wrote letters to Amina—never sent, just folded and placed beneath the jacaranda tree.

One of the Letters

Dear Amina.

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Ryn cried today. Not because I hurt her—but because she realized I never truly saw her. I saw you. From the moment you spoke beneath the blossoms. I'm not asking for forgiveness. I'm asking for a chance to show you who I've become. I'm still searching. Not just for you—but for the man you believed I could be. I hope you're well. I hope you're writing. I hope you still believe in love.

Matthew

Still, no reply.

But Matthew didn't stop.

He began planning a trip to Tororo. Not to chase her—but to be near her world. To understand it. To walk the roads she walked. To breathe the air she breathed. He knew she might never come back. But he also knew that love—real love—wasn't about possession. It was about presence.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Beneath the Blossoms Again

Tororo was quiet that morning. The sun rose slowly over the hills, casting long shadows across the red earth. Birds sang softly, and the wind carried the scent of dew and hibiscus.

Matthew stood outside the community center where Amina's poetry workshop was being held. He had come early, unsure if she would be there. His heart thudded with every passing minute.

Then, he saw her.

Amina stepped out of the building, her hair tied back, a notebook in her hand. She looked radiant—strong, calm, distant.

Matthew froze.

She saw him.

Their eyes met.

She didn't smile.

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He walked toward her slowly, as if afraid she might vanish.

“Amina,” he said, voice trembling. “I’ve been looking for you.”

She didn’t speak.

“I came to say I’m sorry. Not just for what I did—but for who I became.”

“I lost myself. I lost you. And I’ve spent every day since trying to become someone worthy of your love.”

She looked at him, eyes unreadable. “And you think showing up here changes everything?”

“No,” he said. “But it’s a start.”

Amina turned away, walking toward the garden behind the center. He followed, keeping his distance.

“I trusted you,” she said. “I gave you my heart. And you shattered it.”

“I know,” he whispered.

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“I don’t need you to fix me,” she continued. “I fixed myself.”

“I don’t want to fix you,” he said. “I want to walk beside you. If you’ll let me.”

She sat on a bench beneath a flame tree, the petals falling like fire around her.

“I don’t know if I can trust you again,” she said.

That evening, Amina returned home and found her grandmother shelling peas on the veranda.

“You saw him,” Mama Naka said without looking up.

Amina nodded.

“And your heart?”

“It’s confused,” she admitted. “It remembers the love. But it also remembers the pain.”

Mama Naka smiled gently. “Love is not forgetting pain. It’s choosing to grow through it.”

She placed a hand on Amina’s. “You are strong. But strength doesn’t mean shutting out joy.”

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Amina sat in silence, the words sinking deep.

That night, Amina opened her old journal. She read the poems she had written about Matthew—the river walk, the coffee dates, the rain, the kiss on the cheek.

She remembered the way he listened. The way he made her laugh. The way he had looked at her like she was poetry itself.

She cried.

Not from pain.

From longing.

The next morning, she returned to the garden. Matthew was there, waiting beneath the flame tree.

She walked up to him, slowly.

“I’ve thought about everything,” she said. “And I need to ask you something.”

“Anything,” he replied.

“Will you promise me—never again? No lies. No betrayal. No forgetting who we are.”

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Matthew stepped closer, eyes full of tears.

“I promise,” he said. “On every sunrise we’ll share. On every poem you’ll write. I promise to love you for the rest of our lives.”

She looked at him, searching his face.

Then, she nodded.

And she whispered:

“Then let’s begin again.”

They sat beneath the tree, hands entwined, hearts open. The wind carried petals around them, like blessings. And for the first time in a long time, they both felt whole.

CHAPTER NINE

The Bloom of Forever

The days after their reunion felt like a new season—one that neither Matthew nor Amina had known before. It wasn't the dizzying rush of early love, nor the fragile hope of reconciliation. It was something steadier. Rooted. Like the jacaranda tree that had witnessed their journey. They returned to Kampala together, hand in hand, hearts aligned.

Matthew found a small house in Muyenga, perched on a hill with a view of Lake Victoria. It had a garden, a quiet veranda, and a spare room that Amina turned into a writing studio. The walls were painted in soft earth tones, and the shelves were filled with books, sketches, and photographs.

They planted flowers together—hibiscus, marigold, and of course, jacaranda. Every morning, they sat outside with tea, watching the sun rise over the lake. Sometimes they spoke. Sometimes they didn't. But the silence between them was no longer heavy—it was sacred.

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Amina's poetry flourished. She began hosting small gatherings at their home—writers, artists, musicians. The evenings were filled with laughter, verse, and the scent of spiced samosas.

Matthew, inspired by her passion, returned to photography. He captured moments—Amina reading beneath the tree, children playing in the street, the way light danced on her face when she laughed.

They collaborated on a project called Whispers Beneath the Jacaranda—a blend of poetry and photography that told stories of love, loss, and healing. It was published locally and quickly gained attention.

One reviewer wrote:

- “Their work feels like a conversation between two souls who have walked through fire and emerged holding hands.”

They didn't rush. But one evening, beneath the stars, Matthew knelt beside the jacaranda tree and asked:

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“Will you walk with me—not just today, but through every season?”

Amina smiled, tears in her eyes. “I already am.”

Their wedding was held in Mbale, in Mama Naka’s garden. It was simple, intimate, and full of joy. Amina wore a dress woven with traditional patterns, and Matthew wore a linen suit with a jacaranda blossom tucked into the lapel.

Mama Naka officiated, her voice strong and warm.

“Love is not a destination,” she said. “It is the road itself.”

They exchanged vows beneath the flame tree, surrounded by friends, family, and the echoes of their journey.

They now traveled together to Zanzibar, Rwanda, the Kenyan coast. But they always returned to Kampala, to their home, to their tree. They taught workshops together—Amina on poetry, Matthew on visual storytelling. Young artists came from all over Uganda to learn, to be

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inspired, to witness a love that had survived and thrived.

They faced challenges, of course. Deadlines, disagreements, moments of doubt. But they had learned how to speak, how to listen, how to hold space for each other.

One night, during a storm, the power went out. They lit candles and sat on the floor, wrapped in blankets.

Amina whispered, “Do you ever think about the past?”

Matthew nodded. “Every day. But not with regret. With gratitude.”

She leaned into him. “Me too.”

On their fifth anniversary, Amina wrote a letter and tucked it into the roots of the jacaranda tree.

To the love we’ve built,

We began with whispers.

We stumbled, we broke, we healed.

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And now, we bloom.

May our love continue to be a garden—tended with care, watered with truth, and rooted in grace.

Amina

Years later, a young couple walked past their home and saw the jacaranda tree in full bloom.

“Who lives there?” the girl asked.

The boy smiled. “Two artists. They say their love grew beneath that tree.”

Inside, Matthew and Amina sat together, older now, but still radiant.

He held her hand.

She read him a poem.

And the blossoms fell gently around them, like blessings.

CHAPTER TEN

The Bloom That Never Fades.

The jacaranda tree outside their home had grown tall and wide, its branches stretching like arms toward the sky. Beneath it, the earth was soft and sacred—covered in petals that fell like blessings. It had witnessed every chapter of their love: the first glance, the heartbreak, the reunion, the vows, and now, the quiet unfolding of a life fully lived.

Matthew stood beneath it one morning, camera in hand, watching the light filter through the leaves. The air was thick with memory. He snapped a photo—not of the tree, but of the empty bench beneath it. Amina would join him soon, tea in hand, notebook tucked under her arm. It was their ritual. Their rhythm.

Inside the house, laughter echoed. Zuri and Nia, now five years old, chased each other through the hallway, their giggles rising like music. Amina called out gently, “Careful, my loves! The world is wide, but your heads are still soft!”

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Matthew smiled. She always had a way with words—even in parenting.

Amina's writing studio had become a sanctuary. The walls were lined with books, framed verses, and sketches Matthew had drawn over the years. A large window overlooked the garden, where butterflies danced among the marigolds.

She sat at her desk, pen in hand, writing a new poem for an upcoming anthology titled *Roots and Wings*. It was a collection of works by Ugandan women—poets, storytellers, dreamers. Amina's contribution was called *The Bloom That Never Fades*.

We are not petals blown by wind,

We are roots that hold the storm.

We are not whispers lost to time,

We are echoes that shape the dawn.

She paused, thinking of her daughters. Of Matthew. Of Mama Naka, who had passed

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peacefully the year before, leaving behind a legacy of wisdom and woven baskets.

Matthew's photography academy had grown beyond his dreams. What began as a small workshop in a borrowed classroom had become a full-fledged center for visual arts. Young photographers from across East Africa came to learn, to create, to find their voice.

He taught not just technique, but philosophy.

“Don't just capture what you see,” he told his students. “Capture what you feel. What you fear. What you love.”

One student, a boy named Kato, had recently won a regional award for a photo titled *Mother's Hands*—a close-up of his grandmother shelling beans, her fingers worn and graceful.

Matthew had cried when he saw it.

Their home was filled with rituals. Sunday mornings meant pancakes and poetry readings. Evenings were for storytelling—Amina would read verses, and Matthew would show slideshows of his latest work. Zuri loved the stories about the river, while Nia preferred the ones about the rain.

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One night, as thunder rolled in the distance, Zuri asked, “Mama, how did you and Papa fall in love?”

Amina smiled. “We didn’t fall. We walked. Sometimes we stumbled. But we always found each other.”

Matthew added, “And we kept choosing each other. Even when it was hard.”

The girls listened, wide-eyed, as the rain tapped gently on the roof.

It was a quiet Tuesday when Amina felt the first wave of fatigue. She brushed it off—too much writing, not enough sleep. But the tiredness lingered. Then came the headaches. The dizziness.

Matthew insisted she see a doctor.

The diagnosis was gentle but firm: early signs of anemia, compounded by stress. Nothing life-threatening, but a signal to slow down. Amina took it seriously. She reduced her workload, spent more time in the garden, and began meditating beneath the jacaranda tree.

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Matthew, ever attentive, adjusted his schedule to be home more. He cooked her favorite meals—matoke with peanut sauce, chapati with avocado—and read her poetry while she rested.

Amina began writing letters to Zuri and Nia—one for each birthday, to be opened when they turned eighteen.

To Zuri, on your 18th birthday:

You are light. You are laughter. You are the rhythm of joy. Never let the world dim your sparkle. Love deeply. Speak boldly. And remember—your roots are strong.

Mama

To Nia, on your 18th birthday:

You are grace. You are fire. You are the pulse of purpose. Let your dreams be wild and your heart be kind. You are not alone.

Mama

Matthew found the letters one day and cried quietly in the garden.

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Years passed like pages turning in a well-loved book. The jacaranda tree grew taller, its blossoms more vibrant each season. The house in Muyenga remained a haven—its walls echoing with laughter, music, and the quiet hum of creativity.

Zuri and Nia blossomed into remarkable young women. Zuri, with her boundless energy and radiant smile, pursued music. She played the kora and sang in three languages. Nia, introspective and fierce, became a writer—her poems sharp as truth and soft as memory.

They were their parents' mirror and evolution.

At sixteen, Zuri performed at the National Theatre in Kampala. Her voice, clear and soulful, moved the audience to tears. Amina sat in the front row, hand in Matthew's, eyes glistening.

"She's got your rhythm," Matthew whispered.

"And your heart," Amina replied.

Nia published her first poem in a literary journal at seventeen. It was titled *Jacaranda Dreams*.

I was born beneath blossoms,

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*Where love was not perfect,
But true.*

*Where silence healed,
And stories bloomed.*

Matthew framed the poem and hung it in the studio.

Amina, now in her sixties, began working on her final anthology—a collection of poems titled *Letters to the Sky*. It was a meditation on aging, motherhood, and the quiet wisdom of time.

She wrote slowly, deliberately, often beneath the jacaranda tree.

One afternoon, she told Matthew, “This will be my last book.”

He looked at her, surprised. “Why?”

She smiled. “Because I’ve said what I needed to say. Now it’s time to listen.”

Matthew, too, had begun to slow down. His academy was now run by former students, and he spent his days mentoring, sketching, and walking through the hills with his camera. He began compiling a visual memoir—photos from every chapter of their life. He titled it *The Bloom That*

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Never Fades, echoing Amina's poem. The final image was of Amina, sitting beneath the jacaranda tree, eyes closed, face turned toward the sun.

One morning, Amina didn't rise with the sun. Matthew found her in bed, pale and quiet. The anemia had returned—more aggressive this time. Doctors were gentle but honest. “She'll need rest. And love. Lots of love.”

Matthew gave her both.

He read to her every day. He cooked her favorite meals. He brought her flowers from the garden. Zuri and Nia returned home, their lives paused to be near her.

Amina, ever the poet, remained calm.

“I'm not afraid,” she said. “I've lived fully. I've loved deeply. I've left words behind.”

They gathered beneath the jacaranda tree one last time—Matthew, Amina, Zuri, Nia, and a few close friends. Amina wore a white shawl, her hair silver, her eyes bright.

She read one final poem aloud.

***When I go,
Do not weep.***

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Plant flowers.

Sing songs.

Tell stories.

I will be in the wind,

In the petals,

In the pause between verses.

I will be love.

She passed peacefully that night, surrounded by those she loved.

Matthew buried her beneath the jacaranda tree, as she had wished. He placed her final book beside her, wrapped in silk. He sat beneath the tree for hours, whispering stories, reading poems, holding space.

Then, he wrote her a letter.

My Amina.

You were my verse. My rhythm. My reason. I will love you in every sunrise. In every blossom. In every breath. Until we meet again.

Matthew

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Matthew passed two years later, quietly, in his sleep. Zuri and Nia buried him beside Amina, beneath the tree that had witnessed it all. They built a small bench there, engraved with the words: **“Love is not perfect. But it is true.”**

Every year, on their parents’ anniversary, they return to the tree. They read poems. They play music. They remember. And the jacaranda blossoms fall.

Soft.

Steady.

Eternal.

R.S.V from Prince Matthew

R.S.V from Nayiruba Amina

R.S.V from Nalugwa Irene Ryn

The End

“This story was a masterpiece of love, growth, and legacy.”