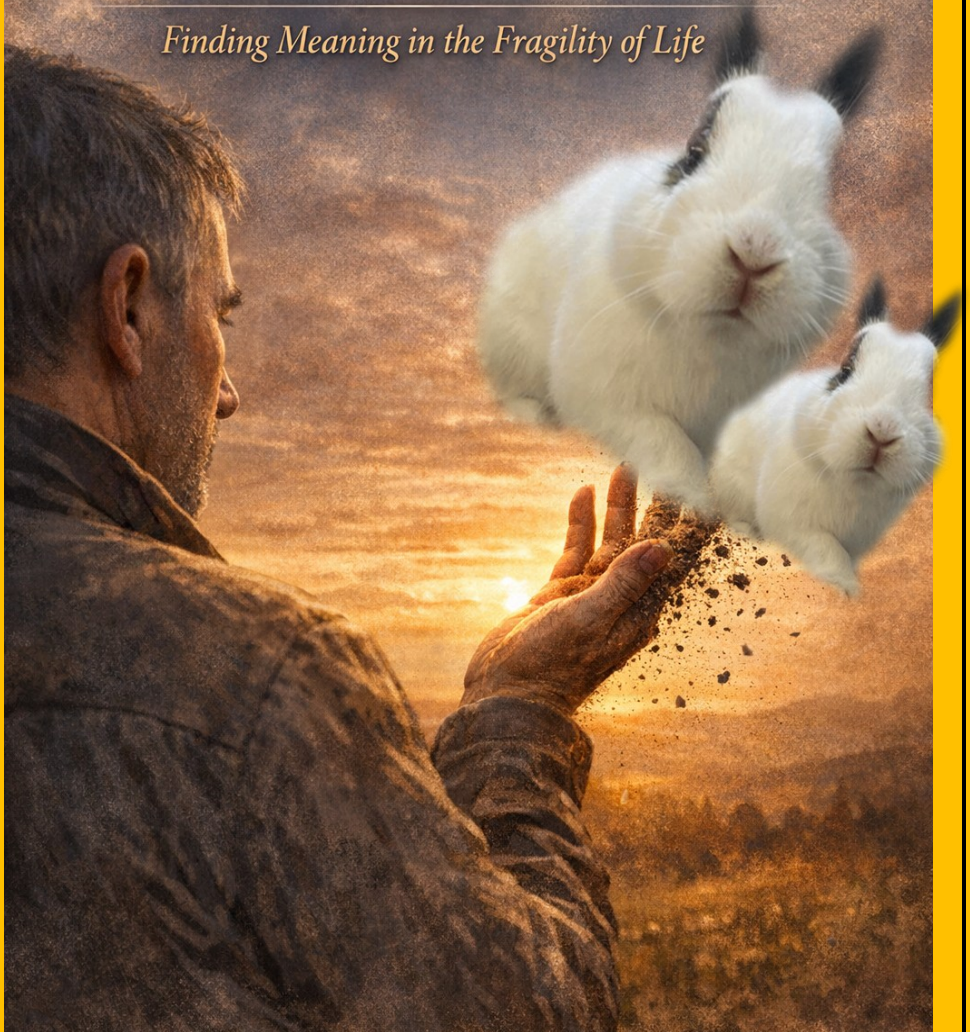


# Ashes *in* Our Hands

*Finding Meaning in the Fragility of Life*



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This is a work of nonfiction based on the author's real-life experiences.

The author has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the events and reflections described. However, memory is inherently subjective, and this book represents the author's honest recollection and emotional truth of the time spent with Misu and the subsequent journey through grief and healing.

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## The Fragility Beneath Our Hands

**Dedication** For Misu — the tiny spark of joy who hopped into my life, taught me tenderness, and left an echo that still warms the garden.

### The Fragility Beneath Our Hands

I remember the day Misu died with a clarity that still catches in my throat. She was a tiny dwarf bunny, her fur impossibly soft, like the gentlest breath against my skin. For those precious months she filled my ordinary world with quiet joy — a small, warm presence that made even routine days feel brighter. When illness took hold, I held her close to my chest, feeling the rapid flutter of her heartbeat slowly weaken beneath my fingers. Her dark eyes searched mine with a silent, pleading look I could not answer. Warm tears slipped down my cheeks as helplessness settled heavy in my bones. No amount of careful feeding, late-night checks, gentle handling, or money spent on care could reverse what was already unfolding.

When her breathing finally slowed and ceased, the silence that followed pressed upon the room like a held breath the world refused to release. In that stillness I felt the full weight of mortality — not only hers, but my own and that of every living thing I had ever held dear. Vivid memories remain: the light, bouncy way she hopped through the house and garden grass, her

tiny nose twitching eagerly at fresh green leaves, her long ears flicking at every rustle of wind or distant bird call. Yet the pain lingers too, a quiet companion reminding me that love and loss are inseparable companions on this path.

In the days that followed, I found myself drawn again and again to my young Baobab bonsai. I would stand before it for long minutes, tracing the smooth, thickening curve of its trunk with my fingertips, feeling the rough texture of bark that spoke of patience and slow resilience. Properly cared for, this tree could live for centuries, far outlasting my own hands that now tended it. And yet even this enduring being, with all its promise of longevity, would one day wither and return to dust. If a creature as fleeting as Misu and a tree as steady as the Baobab shared the same fate, what did that say about us humans — we who build lives as if they might somehow escape time?

This book grew from that aching question. It is not a lament filled only with sorrow, but a search for meaning beneath the inevitability of decay. Misu's short life quietly opened the door; the Baobab standing patiently in my garden became its living symbol — a beautiful paradox of strength wrapped in fragility. Through these pages I explore what it means to live fully in a world that is constantly slipping through our fingers: to find beauty not in false permanence, but in the fleeting, graceful moments we are given.

## **Part I — The Small Beginning**

### **Chapter 1: She Arrived Quietly**

She arrived on an ordinary morning, the kind where sunlight slanted through the kitchen window and the garden outside hummed with distant birdsong. No ceremony, no warning. Just a small dwarf bunny placed gently into my open hands. She was tiny enough to cup completely — a fragile bundle of soft white and black fur(similar to a Siamese cat), instinctive warmth, and wide-eyed curiosity. Her pink nose twitched constantly, testing the air, while her dark eyes blinked up at a world that must have seemed impossibly vast. I felt the delicate rise and fall of her chest, the rapid beat of a heart no larger than a thimble pulsing against my palm.

In that moment something deep and ancient inside me softened. The instinctive tenderness that rises toward anything vulnerable stirred, reminding me of the sacredness hidden in even the smallest lives. She relaxed slightly against my warmth, trusting a stranger she could not comprehend. Her ears, still slightly folded, twitched at the sound of my voice when I whispered a soft greeting.

I carried her carefully that first afternoon. She explored her surroundings hesitantly at first, then with growing confidence — hopping in short bursts through the grass, pausing to nibble a tender leaf, her whole-body alert and alive. I sat nearby, watching the way sunlight caught the fine hairs on her fur, turning it almost silver. For those first hours, the world felt lighter, gentler. I did not yet know this gentle beginning already carried the seed of its ending. I only knew the simple, quiet

pleasure of her presence. And for that brief time, it was more than enough.

Even now the memory returns uninvited during quiet moments. I replay that first morning and wonder if I should have done something differently right from the start. Guilt attaches itself quickly to love, searching for blame where none exists. I could not have known how short our shared days would be, or how deeply this small creature would burrow into my heart. Sometimes the longing rises sharply — a wish to return to that exact afternoon, to hold her just a little longer, to feel the softness of her fur and breathe in the faint scent of hay and fresh garden earth that clung to her. But life offers no rewinds. It gives only memories, and with them the tender ache that travels alongside.

## **Chapter 2: A World Made of Small Things**

Misu taught me early that life reveals itself most clearly in small, ordinary moments. She explored her new world with cautious curiosity — pausing to sniff a single blade of grass trembling in the breeze, tilting her head at the sound of water trickling from the garden hose, or stretching luxuriously in a warm patch of sunlight on the floor. Through her I began noticing details I had long overlooked: the way light moved in shifting patterns across leaves, the subtle rustle of wind through the grass, the simple comfort of being held without expectation or demand.

One afternoon I watched her discover a fallen leaf. She approached it slowly, nose twitching, then batted at it playfully with her front paws before nibbling the edge. Her whole body seemed alive with delight in that tiny discovery. In those

moments a small life quietly expanded my own. Pure, uncomplicated presence became her silent teaching — slowing my steps, anchoring me fully in the now instead of rushing toward whatever came next. In her smallness she revealed the surprising largeness and richness of ordinary things.

Why does the world so often urge us toward grand achievements, constant accumulation, and loud success when the moments that truly reshape us are so subtle? A shared breath felt against the skin. A gentle nuzzle into an open hand. A patch of sunlight warming two beings' side by side. Misu showed me that tenderness and careful attention matter more than any measurable progress. Yet even as I began learning this lesson, I felt the limits of my power to protect what I loved. Her loss would later cut so deeply precisely because she had first taught me to see the world more clearly and more gently.

### **Chapter 3: The Garden as Sanctuary**

The house quickly became our shared realm, a place where time moved differently and the noise of daily life softened into something manageable. Misu would hop through the grass with a kind of cautious joy, her small body creating tiny paths in the green. She paused often to sniff the air, her nose working busily, or tilted her head toward a sound only she could hear — perhaps a distant insect or the rustle of a leaf. Sunlight filtered through overhead branches, dappling her fur with moving patterns of light and shadow that made her look almost luminous.

I watched her with a tenderness I did not fully understand at the time. There was something grounding in her small presence — something that pulled me out of racing thoughts and worries,

anchoring me firmly in the present moment. Nearby stood the young Baobab bonsai, its trunk already beginning to thicken with patient strength. Its slow, deliberate growth mirrored something stirring quietly in me: a longing for steadiness, for roots, for a sense of belonging in an often uncertain world.

In that garden, surrounded by living things in all their varied forms, I felt connected to something larger than myself. Something timeless. Something sacred. The air carried the rich scent of soil and green growth. I did not yet know how important this sanctuary would become when safety proved far more fragile than I imagined.

The garden was meant to be a safe haven where nothing bad could intrude. But life honours no such boundaries. In quieter moments I still find myself turning the same painful questions over in my mind: if I had watched more closely that day, been more careful with even the smallest details, would she still be here hopping through the grass? The mind can be relentless in its search for control and answers. I wanted more time with her. I felt its sudden absence like a sharp, lingering sting.

## **Part II — The Bond Deepens and Then Breaks**

### **Chapter 4: The Bond That Formed**

It did not take long for Misu to weave herself fully into the fabric of my daily rhythm. She became part of the gentle rituals that structured my days: the quiet mornings when I prepared her fresh greens and watched her eat with delicate enthusiasm, the slow afternoons spent together in the garden, the evening moments

when she would nuzzle into my hand or rest contentedly nearby, simply happy to share the same space.

Trust grew between us — fragile at first, then quietly real. She would follow me with her eyes across the lawn, as if trying to understand the shape of my larger world. When I sat on the floor, she would hop close and settle against my leg, her tiny heartbeat a soft, steady flutter I could feel through my clothing. Love, I realized in those peaceful hours, needs no grand explanations or long justification. It arrives simply and changes everything in ways both subtle and profound.

One particularly warm afternoon she discovered my shoelace and spent long minutes batting at it playfully, her ears flopping with each energetic movement. I laughed softly, the sound surprising even me. In moments like that the bond felt complete — wordless, pure, and deeply comforting.

I had not expected to love her as deeply as I did. That purity made the coming grief feel especially sharp when it arrived. In quiet moments I still wonder what becomes of the love small creatures offer so freely and unconditionally. Humans cling to stories of afterlives and reunions. For them, silence often follows. These unanswered questions echo softly, carrying both ache and a kind of wonder.

## **Chapter 5: The First Signs and the Day Everything Changed**

Looking back, there were subtle signs I wish I had understood sooner. Misu seemed a little less energetic one morning. Her hops across the grass were shorter. She spent more time resting in sunny spots, her breathing sometimes coming in quick,

shallow bursts. I told myself it was nothing serious — perhaps just a mild chill or the heat of the day. I offered extra greens, held her longer, watched her more closely. But the changes continued, quiet and insistent.

The final day arrived without mercy or warning. One moment she was still trying to explore, her nose twitching at familiar leaves. The next she was trembling in my arms, her small body growing heavier as strength faded. I held her close to my chest, feeling the rapid flutter of her heartbeat slow beneath my fingers. Her dark eyes met mine one last time with that silent plea. I whispered her name again and again, as if the sound alone could anchor her here. Warm tears fell freely onto her fur. The helplessness pressed heavier with every passing second, a weight I could not lift.

Outside the window the world continued unchanged — birds sang, leaves rustled in the breeze, distant sounds of life carried on. But inside me something broke open. Grief swept in like a sudden storm: disorienting, relentless, all-consuming. Why her? Why now? Why so soon after she had brought such light into my days?

This remains the part I wrestle with most deeply. The mind replays every detail in slow motion — the exact way her ears twitched one final time, the gradual cooling of her small body against mine, the unbearable silence that followed her last breath. Was it my responsibility? Could I have seen the signs sooner or done something more? The guilt lingers, sometimes faint like a shadow at the edge of vision, sometimes crushing and immediate. I still wish desperately for one more minute — just long enough to say a proper goodbye, to feel her warmth once

more, to breathe in the familiar scent of her fur mixed with garden earth. But time moves forward without negotiation or mercy. No amount of progress, money, or human striving can purchase even a single extra moment with what we love. That truth cuts deepest of all.

## **Chapter 6: The Silence That Followed**

The house felt impossibly hollow in the days afterward. Her small sounds had become such a natural part of the rhythm — the soft rustle when she moved across the floor, the gentle tapping of her feet on tiles, the subtle shifts of presence that only someone who loves deeply would notice. Their sudden absence created a silence too large for her tiny size. It pressed against the chest and settled deep into the bones, a constant, heavy reminder of what was gone.

I caught myself listening for her without realizing it — turning my head at the slightest sound, expecting her to appear in the doorway or curled in her favorite sunny spot on the rug. The garden, once alive with her cautious hops and playful discoveries, now felt incomplete. Her favorite patches of grass stood untouched. The Baobab cast its steady shadow across empty ground. Grief is not only absence. It is the heavy presence of everything that now highlights what is missing.

In that expanding quiet I confronted my lack of control more honestly than ever before. The world teaches us to plan, to manage, to predict outcomes. Yet death ignores every strategy and preparation. I felt small, deeply human, and powerless before the things that mattered most. The garden offered no easy

answers, only its patient companionship as I sat with the weight of questions that refused to resolve.

### **Part III — The Garden as Witness**

#### **Chapter 7: The Weight of Unanswered Questions**

Grief raises questions that hover without easy resolution. Why this small life? Why now, when she seemed full of quiet delight? I replayed the final days endlessly in my mind, searching every detail for meaning or a way to undo what had happened. But grief is not a puzzle to solve through logic alone. It is a wound that must be lived through, felt fully, day by painful day.

We humans build comforting myths of permanence — around achievements, reputations, legacies we hope will outlast us, even the machines and systems we create in the belief they might endure. Misu had none of these. She lived simply and fully in each moment, without ambition or pretence. Her passing shook the foundations of my assumptions more deeply than any grand pursuit ever could. Even the Baobab, with its promise of centuries, remains bound by the same universal law. Longevity offers no escape from impermanence.

Some questions are meant to be carried rather than answered. The garden stood silent beside me through long afternoons. The Baobab offered its steady presence. The world continued turning as if nothing had shifted. For me, everything had.

## **Chapter 8: The Garden Without Her**

Returning to the garden felt like stepping into a living memory that was both comforting and painful. Her favorite sunny patches still warmed the grass with the same golden light. The spots where she loved to pause and nibble remained unchanged. The Baobab still cast its familiar, patient shadow across the lawn. Yet the space felt incomplete — as if a single bright thread had been pulled from the fabric, leaving everything slightly unravelled and quieter.

Still, the garden held me without demand or judgment. It asked nothing of me — only offered its steady, unhurried presence. I could sit among the plants and grieve without needing to explain or perform strength. The scent of soil and green growth surrounded me. Birds called overhead. Life continued its quiet cycle even as my own heart felt paused.

Moving forward, even one small step through the grass, sometimes felt like a gentle betrayal. I longed fiercely for one more moment with her — one more chance to watch her hop with delight, to feel her nuzzle against my hand. Acceptance did not come as a single decision but as a slow, often reluctant surrender to what could not be changed. Time, indifferent as ever, continued its forward movement whether my heart was ready or not.

## **Chapter 9: The Rhythm of Seasons**

The garden taught its deepest lessons through the quiet turning of the seasons themselves. Spring arrived with tentative green shoots pushing through the soil — small, determined signs that

life finds ways to return even after loss. I remembered how Misu had explored those early sprouts with such curiosity, her nose twitching eagerly.

Summer brought abundance and the warm illusion that joy and energy might last forever — much like the bright presence Misu had brought into my days. Autumn showed a graceful surrender as leaves turned gold and fell softly to the ground. Winter laid the garden bare in honest stillness, revealing its bones beneath — a necessary pause before renewal could begin again.

Misu's life had felt like spring turning into summer — full of light and playful discovery. Her passing echoed autumn's letting go. My grief mirrored winter's quiet bareness. Yet even in the coldest, emptiest stretches, the garden held the hidden promise of spring. Impermanence was not a flaw in existence but its very rhythm — a cycle of emergence, flourishing, fading, and return.

## **Part IV — Reflections and Ripples**

### **Chapter 10: Lessons from Small Lives**

It is often the smallest lives that whisper the greatest truths. Misu lived without worry for tomorrow or any desire to leave a grand mark. She simply existed — curious, present, full of quiet delight in each hop and discovery. She taught that presence can be more powerful than any attempt at permanence. She called forth tenderness — the natural softness that arises when caring for something fragile and dependent. And she demonstrated, perhaps most poignantly, that love, though it carries the certainty of eventual loss, remains deeply worth giving.

Her brevity held more truth than many longer lives I have known. Fragility demanded my careful attention and patience. Simplicity cut through the noise of human striving and revealed what truly matters in the end.

Why do small lives so often leave such large echoes in our hearts? Their purity slices through pretence and ambition. Their love feels uncomplicated and complete. The ache they leave behind may itself be a form of wisdom — a persistent reminder that even the briefest connection is never wasted, but instead becomes part of who we are.

## **Chapter 11: What We Leave Behind**

When a life ends, the world keeps moving — sun rising, seasons turning, days unfolding — yet something inside us feels unmistakably altered. Misu left no monuments or measurable achievements, yet she left ripples that continue to spread: remembered joy in ordinary moments, a gentler way of noticing the world, a lesson in the beauty and pain of impermanence.

Legacy lives most vividly in hearts rather than stone — in memories carried forward, in the way one small presence quietly changes another. The Baobab carries the subtle mark of every careful pruning and watering I have given it over the years. Family stories and ancestors form invisible threads connecting past to present. Creation itself — whether shaping a tree, tending a garden, or setting these words down — allows us to speak beyond our own limited time, not as defiance of endings but as a sincere, vulnerable offering.

What will I leave behind? Perhaps not grand accomplishments, but the imprint of presence and connection. Meaning, I am learning, emerges not from permanence but from the depth with which we inhabit our moments and touch the lives around us.

## **Part V — Toward Healing**

### **Chapter 12: The First Signs of Healing**

Healing did not announce itself with fanfare. It grew quietly, almost shyly, alongside the grief that still lived in my chest. The first signs were small and tentative: a stretch of garden quiet that did not ache quite so sharply, a memory of Misu's playful hops that brought a soft warmth instead of immediate tears, a morning when the weight pressing on my shoulders felt fractionally lighter.

At first, I distrusted these moments, fearing they signalled forgetting or betrayal. But healing is not erasure. It is learning to carry the memory without collapsing beneath its full weight. The garden and Baobab became gentle witnesses — patient companions as new green shoots appeared and old leaves fell. Time did not remove the pain but slowly gave it space to breathe and soften around the edges. Healing revealed itself less as a destination and more as a direction — slow, often invisible until one day you notice you are standing a little differently inside your own life.

Guilt remained a quiet shadow during this time, whispering what I might have done better or sooner. Yet I began to understand it as love that still had nowhere else to go. The questions about fairness, time, and why small lives end so quickly persisted. I

learned, gradually, to walk alongside them with greater gentleness rather than fighting their presence.

### **Chapter 13: The Return of Light and Joy**

There came a day when the world appeared different — not because external circumstances had shifted dramatically, but because something inside me had. Sunlight felt warmer on my skin. The garden stirred with renewed life and colour. The Baobab stood tall as a symbol of endurance rather than only reminder of loss. Grief had not vanished entirely. It had transformed, now living more peacefully beside a growing sense of gratitude for the time Misu and I had shared.

Joy returned softly, almost hesitantly at first: a bird landing lightly on a branch near the Baobab, the fresh scent of rain on dry soil after a shower, the soft glow of morning light filtering through new leaves. These ordinary moments did not replace sorrow; they began to coexist with it more comfortably. Grief and joy, I realized, are not opposites but companions — each giving the other deeper shape and meaning.

When joy first flickered back into my days, it carried its own brief pang of guilt — as if allowing lightness somehow diminished the depth of what I had lost. But love does not demand perpetual suffering as proof of remembrance. Feeling moments of lightness again became one of the quietest ways to honour the joy Misu had once brought so freely into my life.

## **Chapter 14: The Shape of Absence and Vulnerability**

Absence gradually took on its own quiet form — an empty corner where she once rested in sunlight, a still patch of garden grass where her tiny paths had once appeared, the hush of mornings that no longer began with her soft, curious presence. Loss had stripped away comfortable illusions of control, certainty, and permanence, leaving me feeling raw and exposed in unexpected ways.

Vulnerability felt frightening at first, like standing without armour in an open field. Yet it proved no weakness. It was simply the honest ground of being human: the willingness to love even when we know loss may follow, to care deeply even when full protection is impossible, to hope even when time is clearly finite. The heart, once broken open by grief, often grows more compassionate and aware in its healing.

Absence sat beside me now — no longer only a heavy burden but also a space where her imprint remained subtle yet enduring, woven into the way I now notice small beauties and move more gently through my days.

## **Chapter 15: Acceptance and the Quiet Courage to Continue**

Acceptance arrived gradually, like a soft breath after long hours of tears — not as approval of the loss, but as a quiet recognition of reality and a willingness to live within it. I began to accept that Misu was gone while still missing her with an ache that had simply changed shape rather than disappeared.

The courage to continue was equally quiet and unassuming: small, everyday steps such as opening the curtains to let in morning light, watering the plants with more deliberate care, allowing a genuine moment of lightness to unfold without immediate guilt. It meant carrying her memory forward rather than attempting to leave it behind. The heart stretched and reshaped itself around the loss, becoming wiser, more tender, and somehow more open to whatever might come next.

Even in acceptance the deepest questions lingered. Yet I found a new humility in acknowledging human limits — that life is finite, love is inherently fragile, and the truest meaning often arises most clearly in moments of full presence rather than grand plans for permanence.

## **Chapter 16: The Wisdom of the Baobab**

The Baobab became an unexpected teacher during this season of healing. Its slow, steady growth, quiet endurance, and patient presence reflected exactly what I most needed to learn. It does not rush or fear the passing seasons. It simply grows — incorporating every mark, every scar, every cycle of leaf and rest into its thickening strength.

Standing beside it one afternoon, running my hand along its trunk, I realized healing is not about moving on completely or erasing the past. It is about growing around the loss — the way a tree grows around a wound, making it part of its living structure rather than something that weakens it. Misu's brief, bright spark and the Baobab's ancient patience together illuminated a central truth I was finally ready to hold: everything in this world is

transient. And because nothing lasts forever, every moment of connection, every small act of love, matters with profound depth.

## **Chapter 17: The Garden at Dusk**

Dusk gradually became my favourite hour in the garden. The light would soften and deepen into rich golds and muted greens. The air cooled gently, carrying the rich, earthy scent of soil and fallen leaves. The world seemed to exhale after the busyness of the day, settling into a peaceful hush.

The Baobab stood as a dark, steady silhouette against the fading sky — ancient in spirit, unhurried in form. In that gentle threshold between day and night, memories of Misu felt especially alive. I could almost see her hopping lightly across the grass again, ears flicking, nose twitching with delight. Grief felt more bearable here, held softly within the larger rhythm of fading light and coming darkness. Questions that had circled endlessly during brighter hours quieted into something closer to feeling than demanding answers.

In the fading light I sometimes sensed a quiet continuation — not as grand certainty or doctrine, but as a gentle presence that had never fully left the garden or my heart.

## **Chapter 18: The Shape of Tomorrow**

There came a softer moment when tomorrow began to take form again — not with sharp plans or bold certainty, but gently, like mist lifting slowly from the garden at dawn. The future no longer felt entirely unreachable or heavy with absence. It began to feel possible, shaped by everything that had come before.

Its shape remains fluid — shifting with each day of healing, each choice to remain open-hearted, each small act of awareness. The future would not erase the past but include it fully: carrying memories of Misu’s playful hops and warm presence, the lessons of fragility and tenderness, the love that had changed me. I still wish for more time with her. I still feel the ache of what was taken too soon. Yet gratitude grows steadily beside the longing. Finite time is what makes each remaining moment feel precious and worth meeting with open hands.

### **Epilogue — The Quiet Continuation**

As I sit in the garden this evening, the Baobab solid and steady beneath my resting hand, I understand more clearly that this story was never only about loss. It was about everything loss quietly revealed: the tenderness we so easily forget to offer ourselves and others, the fragility we often try to push aside in our rush through days, and the subtle beauty waiting in ordinary moments we might otherwise overlook.

Misu entered my life quietly, without fanfare. She changed it completely with her small, bright presence. And she left an imprint that continues to shape how I move through the world — more attentive, more gentle, more grateful for what is given even when it cannot stay.

The garden still carries her echo in its rhythms. The Baobab carries it in its patient growth. I carry it in the way my heart now holds both sorrow and joy more comfortably side by side. Life continues not by forcing ourselves to forget what was lost, but by allowing it to become part of what remains — woven gently into the fabric of who we are becoming.

The seasons will keep turning. The garden will keep growing in its quiet cycles. The Baobab will continue stretching toward the sky with its slow, patient wisdom. And I will keep walking forward — not away from the past, but with it, enriched and softened by everything it taught me.

Healing, I have learned, is ultimately an opening rather than a closing. An opening to new moments and small joys. An opening to deeper understandings of love and loss. An opening to the quiet truth that love does not simply end — it transforms, echoes, and continues in ways both seen and unseen.

As the last light fades and the first stars appear overhead, a sense of peace settles over the garden. Not the perfect peace of complete resolution, but the honest peace of acceptance — the kind that comes from knowing that everything belongs here, even the painful and fleeting parts.

This book is not an ending. It is a continuation — of the lessons Misu left behind in her brief time, of the garden's patient teachings, of the long and gentle arc of healing that bends slowly toward whatever tomorrow may bring.

And so, I close these pages with deep gratitude — for the small life that touched mine so profoundly, for the grief that reshaped me in unexpected ways, for the garden that held space for every tear and every tentative smile, and for every reader who has walked this path alongside me.

May you find your own quiet wisdom in the small lives that cross your days. May you notice the subtle beauty waiting in ordinary moments. May you carry your losses with the same

tenderness they once offered you. And may you grow — slowly, steadily, courageously — toward your own shape of tomorrow.

And above all, may you always remember this simple truth: even the smallest life can leave an echo that warms the heart long after it has hopped out of sight.



# Ode to Misu

O tiny sovereign of sunlit grass, Soft as dawn's first breath  
against my skin, you arrived without fanfare — a trembling  
spark of fur and heartbeat, ears like fragile wings. In cupped  
hands you fit, a living thimble of warmth that slowed the rush of  
larger days.

You hopped through dew like scattered stars, Nose twitching at  
every leaf and shifting light, Teaching the world was vast, yet  
wonder small. No empire needed. Just presence — pure and  
bright — Enough to fill the hollows I had never named.

Then came the trembling, the slowing breath. Your dark eyes  
searching mine for help I could not give. I held you close as  
silence claimed the room, Larger than your form, heavier than  
stone. One more minute, I whispered. Just one more.

Yet in your leaving you planted deeper seeds: Tenderness for  
every fragile thing, Keener eyes for sunlight on the leaves, A  
heart that learned to hold both joy and grief as quiet companions  
on the same green path.

Misu, bright-eyed wanderer, my small guide — Though time has  
taken your warm weight from hands. Your echo lingers in the  
garden's hush. In every pause where wonder still takes root. You  
hopped into my days a fleeting gift and left a love that warms the  
heart long after.

Misu - you have hopped beyond our sight.

## Summary

In a quiet garden shaped by changing seasons and tender memory, a small dwarf bunny named Misu hops into the author's life and brings unexpected joy and wonder. Her playful presence, gentle bond, and sudden passing open a heartfelt doorway into profound reflections on love, grief, impermanence, and the delicate threads that connect every living thing.

Through vivid daily moments, the patient wisdom of a Baobab bonsai, and the garden's quiet rhythms, this intimate memoir explores how even the smallest lives teach us to cherish presence, embrace fragility, and walk the slow, honest path of healing. Gentle, emotionally resonant, and deeply human, it is a tender companion for anyone who has loved a small creature fiercely and been forever changed by both the joy and the ache of letting go.

## About the Author

DuGallan is a writer and quiet observer of small lives, tending a garden in Cape Town where a young Baobab bonsai still stands as witness to both joy and loss. This book grew directly from the brief but transformative time spent with Misu, a tiny dwarf bunny whose sudden passing opened a deeper reflection on fragility, presence, and the patient wisdom of nature.

Drawing from personal experience rather than theory, DuGallan explores how even the smallest creatures can reshape a heart and teach lessons that grander pursuits often overlook. When not writing or tending the garden, DuGallan finds peace in slow mornings, seasonal rhythms, and the gentle practice of noticing what most people pass by.

Misu's story is not fiction — it is a true chapter from a life still learning to hold both sorrow and gratitude with open hands.