

BLACK LOVE

THE POETRY OF US

*Poems About Desire, Friendship, Faith, Laughter, Healing,
Passion & Forever*

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DEDICATION

*For Black men and Black women who still believe love can be
safe, passionate, funny, faithful, intelligent, healing, and free.*

*For those who are learning to love better than what they
witnessed.*

A NOTE BEFORE THE POEMS

Black love deserves more than one voice. It deserves slow songs and bass lines, Sunday mornings and Saturday nights, fresh sneakers and wedding rings, prayer closets and private rooms, kitchen-table arguments and red-light kisses. It deserves the friendship under the romance, the mind before the body, the laughter after the tension, the prayer after the fear, and the courage to remain tender in a world that often rewards hardness.

This collection is not a claim that Black love is perfect. It is a celebration of its range. These poems move through admiration, friendship, desire, faith, humor, vulnerability, healing, conflict, sensuality, aging, commitment, and the simple miracle of two people continuing to choose each other.

Some poems whisper. Some flirt. Some pray. Some laugh out loud. Some carry the street in their rhythm. Some are grown and intimate. All of them return to the same conviction: love becomes deepest when two people are seen, respected, desired, understood, and allowed to be fully human.

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MOVEMENT I

BEFORE I TOUCHED YOU, I TOUCHED YOUR MIND

BLACK LOVE, IN ANOTHER VOICE

Before My Hands Knew You

I touched you
long before my fingers ever did.
Somewhere between
"What do you think?"
and "Tell me more,"
I started learning the shape of your
mind.

Before candlelight,
before bedrooms,
before my mouth learned the
geography of your kiss,
I knew the sound of your courage,
the rhythm of your questions,
the rooms you kept locked behind
your smile.

When our hands finally met,
it did not feel like a beginning.
It felt like our bodies
catching up
to a love
our minds had already begun.

I Fell for Your Mind First

Your beauty introduced you,
but your mind made me stay.
I liked the way you questioned easy
answers,
the way you could disagree without
becoming cruel,
the way your laughter arrived
right after a serious thought.
I wanted to know what books
changed you,
what mistakes humbled you,
what dreams still kept you awake.
By the time I noticed
how beautiful your mouth was,
I was already in love
with what came out of it.

The Way You Think Is Sexy

Everybody talks about curves.
I noticed conclusions.
I noticed how you connect things,
how you hear what was not said,
how you make room for another point
of view
without surrendering your own.
You leaned across the table
and explained what you believed.
I forgot the food was getting cold.
Baby, keep talking.
Some people undress with their
hands.
You do it with a sentence.

Conversations After Midnight

At midnight we stopped
performing.

No polished answers.

No first-date smile.

No pretending we had healed
everything that ever hurt.

You told me why you sometimes pull
away.

I told you why silence makes me
nervous.

We laughed at things
that had once made us cry.

The clock kept moving,
but neither of us wanted to leave.

Some kisses happen with lips.

That night, ours happened with
honesty.

Tell Me What You Never Tell Anybody

Give me the story beneath the
story.

Not the version for coworkers,
church people,
family reunions,
or social media.

Tell me what scares you
when the house gets quiet.
Tell me what you still want
though you think you are too old to
want it.

I will not use your truth as a weapon.
I asked because I want to know
the woman behind the armor
and love her too.

Your Mind in My Lap

Rest your thoughts here.

You have carried decisions all day,
answered everybody,
solved everybody,
remembered what everybody forgot.

Come sit beside me.
Let your mind loosen its shoes.
You do not have to explain everything
tonight.

I can listen without fixing.
I can hold a silence without fearing it.
Put your tired thoughts in my lap.
Let me love the part of you
that never gets to clock out.

Mental Foreplay

Ask me something dangerous.

Not my favorite color.

Ask me what I regret.

Ask what success costs me.

Ask what kind of man I am trying to
become.

Let me ask what makes you feel safe,
what makes you feel wanted,
what you will never tolerate again.

Let curiosity pull us closer.

Before skin knows skin,
let truth brush against truth.

I Wanted Your Thoughts Naked

I was not asking you to
remove a thing.

I wanted the guarded sentence,
the uncensored opinion,
the dream you call unrealistic
so nobody can laugh at it first.

I wanted your mind without makeup,
your heart without company
manners.

Show me the part of you
that does not know how to pose.
That is the woman
I came to meet.

Talk to Me Slowly

Do not rush the truth.

Let it come out uneven
if that is how it lives inside you.

Pause.

Change your mind halfway through.

Start again.

I am not grading your feelings.

I am learning your language.

Talk to me slowly, baby.

I want to understand you
more than I want to answer.

The First Kiss Was a Conversation

Before our mouths met,
we had already crossed a line.

You told me something true.

I did not run.

I told you something ugly.

You did not flinch.

We sat there looking at each other
with nothing left to impress.

That was the first kiss.

Everything after
was only punctuation.

I Studied Your Silence

Your silence is not empty.

Sometimes it means you are thinking.
Sometimes it means you are hurt.
Sometimes it means you have learned
that speaking too soon can make a fire
bigger.

I used to fill every quiet place
with my own fear.

Now I watch your eyes.

I wait.

Love taught me
that listening also happens
when nobody is talking.

Vocabulary of Us

We made our own language.

A look across a crowded room.
A hand on the knee under the table.
The one word that means,
"I know, baby, I know."

We learned when "fine" means fine
and when it absolutely does not.

Years of loving you
have made me bilingual.
I speak English
and you.

You Made Intelligence Beautiful

You never had to play small
to make me feel tall.

Bring the degrees.

Bring the experience.

Bring the questions I cannot answer.

Bring the opinion that makes me
rethink mine.

I do not need your light dimmed
so mine can be seen.

Baby, shine.

A man who loves you well

should never be afraid

of the brightness he prayed for.

I Could Listen to You Forever

There is a moment
when you forget I am watching.

You start telling a story,
hands moving,
eyes alive,
voice climbing and falling.

I stop following the story.
I just watch you exist.

Maybe forever is not always a vow.
Maybe sometimes it is simply
wanting the conversation
not to end.

Before Skin, There Was Soul

We were not born knowing
how to love each other.

We learned.

Question by question.

Boundary by boundary.

Apology by apology.

Before I knew the warmth of your
body,

I knew the weight of your history.

Before desire, there was respect.

Before passion, there was safety.

That is why touching you
never felt casual.

Skin was only the doorway.

Soul was the room.

MOVEMENT II

FRIENDS FIRST

BLACK LOVE, IN ANOTHER VOICE

My Favorite Human

I love you, yes.
But I also like you.

That may be the secret nobody sings
about.

I like your jokes,
your strange little habits,
the way you narrate traffic
like the drivers can hear you.

I would choose you for the road trip,
the grocery run,
the hard conversation,
and the lazy Sunday.

Romance is beautiful.
But friendship is why
I still want you in the room
when nothing romantic is happening.

I Actually Like You

Some people stay together
out of history.
Some out of fear.
Some because leaving is complicated.
I stay because I still like you.

I like who you are
when nobody is watching.
I like your mind, your mess,
your stubborn little rituals.
Desire brought heat.
Friendship brought chairs
and taught us how to sit together
after the fire.

Lovers Who Laugh Together

We have laughed
in inappropriate places.

At funerals when we should not have.
In church when somebody sang the
wrong verse.

In bed when romance took an
unexpected turn.
In the car until tears blurred the road.

Life has tried hard
to make us serious.

Thank God
we keep finding reasons
not to cooperate.

Best Friend with Benefits of the Heart

You know too much
to be temporary.

You know which stories I exaggerate.
You know when my confidence is real
and when it is borrowed.
You know what I order
before I open the menu.

And somehow
you still kiss me like a secret.

Best friend.

Great love.

Same person.

That is a dangerous kind of blessing.

You Knew Me Before the Romance

Before I dressed up for you,
you had seen me tired.

Before the cologne,
you knew the sweat.

Before the polished answers,
you knew where I had failed.

You watched me become
without pretending I arrived finished.

That is why your love feels different.
You did not fall for the brochure.
You knew the building.

We Can Sit Here and Say Nothing

There is a comfort
that only years can teach.

No need to entertain.

No need to fill the room.

You read.

I scroll.

The television talks to itself.

Our feet touch on the couch.

That is enough.

Silence with the right person
is not absence.

It is peace with company.

You Are Who I Call First

Good news, I call you.
Bad news, I call you.
Ridiculous news, definitely you.
Before the post,
before the group chat,
before I tell the world,
I want to hear your voice.
You are not merely part of my life.
You are the place
my life reports to.

The Friendship Saved Us

There were nights
romance could not fix it.

We were angry.

Tired.

Too proud to be poetic.

Then one of us remembered
we were friends.

Friends do not always agree,
but they try to understand.

We put down the scorecards,
ordered food,
and started talking like people
who actually wanted each other to
win.

I Trust You with My Ugly Days

You do not only get
the version of me fit for photographs.
You get the day I doubt myself.
The day I am impatient.
The day old wounds make new noise.
And I get yours.

We do not romanticize the ugly.
We simply refuse to abandon each
other
for having human weather.

Ride with Me

Not ride for me blindly.
Ride with me wisely.
Tell me when I am wrong.
Tell me when the plan is foolish.
Tell me when pride is driving.
I do not need a passenger
who applauds every wrong turn.
I need a woman
who loves me enough
to help us get home.

My Safe Place Has a Name

Safety is not silence.
It is knowing I can speak.
It is not agreement.
It is knowing disagreement
will not become humiliation.
Your name became a place
inside me
where I do not have to brace.
That is one of the deepest ways
a person can be loved.

You Know Where the Bodies Are Buried

You know every foolish era.
Every bad haircut.
Every plan that failed loudly.
Every person I should never have
dated.

You possess enough information
to destroy my public image.

Yet you mostly use it
to make me laugh at dinner.

That, my love,
is friendship
and excellent blackmail etiquette.

We Were Friends Before Forever

Forever sounded too big
when we first met.

So we started smaller.

Coffee.

Phone calls.

Checking in.

Showing up.

Friendship laid one brick at a time
until one day
we looked around
and realized
we had built somewhere to stay.

I Miss My Friend When We Fight

The worst part of fighting you
is losing my favorite person
for the length of the argument.

I want to tell you something funny,
then remember I am mad.

I reach for the phone,
then remember you are the reason
I put it down.

This is ridiculous.

Come here.

We can solve the problem
after I get my friend back.

Let's Grow Old Talking Trash

I do not only want anniversaries.

I want commentary.

I want us eighty years old

judging television outfits,

arguing over whose memory is

correct,

and whispering jokes in places

we are supposed to behave.

Let the romance age.

Let the knees complain.

But please, God,

let us still be able

to make each other laugh.

MOVEMENT III

BLACK WOMAN

BLACK LOVE, IN ANOTHER VOICE

Brown-Skinned Hallelujah

Some praise arrives with music.
Some walks into the room
in brown skin.

Not because beauty is all you are,
but because beauty has been trying
to describe you for years.

Your color is not a trend.
It is inheritance, sun, history,
motherline, survival, and softness.

When I look at you,
I do not see a shade to compare.
I see a reason
to thank God slowly.

Black Woman Walking

Watch her walk.
Not for the body first.
For the authority.
She has carried rooms
that never thanked her.
Carried families
that called it duty.
Carried pain
without letting it rename her.
Now she walks like a woman
returning burdens
to their rightful owners.

Her Crown Does Not Require Permission

She does not need a committee
to approve her becoming.

No vote for her confidence.

No signature for her boundaries.

No apology attached to her ambition.

Queen is not a costume.

It is not arrogance.

It is knowing what God put inside you
and refusing to negotiate it away.

Soft Is Not Weak

She got tired of proving
she could survive everything.
So she learned softness.
Warm baths.
No.
Naps.
Flowers for no reason.
Asking for help before collapse.
The world called her strong
when it benefited from her
exhaustion.
I call her strong
when she finally chooses peace.

She Smells Like Home

Maybe it is the lotion.
Maybe the perfume.
Maybe something I cannot buy.
When she hugs me,
my shoulders lower.
The day stops chasing me.
Home is not always an address.
Sometimes it is brown arms
and a familiar scent
and somebody saying,
"You made it back."

Melanin in the Morning

Morning light loves you.

It finds every shade
the night kept secret.
Gold at the cheek.
Deep brown at the shoulder.
Warmth across sleepy eyes.

No filter.
No performance.
Just you,
half awake,
beautiful enough
to make sunrise look rehearsed.

The Shape of Her Confidence

Confidence changed her posture
before it changed her clothes.

She stopped entering rooms
asking silently to belong.
Stopped translating her brilliance
into something less threatening.

The most beautiful curve on her body
was the one in her back
when she finally stood up straight.

Her Laugh Has Bass in It

Her laugh is not polite.
Thank God.

It starts somewhere deep,
throws its head back,
and takes the whole room.

People look.
She does not care.

I fell in love with a woman
whose joy refuses
to use an indoor voice.

Queen Without the Performance

Take the crown off.
I still see you.

You do not have to be magnificent
every minute.
You can be unsure.
You can need reassurance.
You can wear old socks
and eat cereal for dinner.
I do not love the title.
I love the woman
who gets tired of carrying it.

I Love Her Ordinary

Everybody celebrates the glamorous
picture.

I love Tuesday.

Her hair wrapped.

Bills on the table.

Phone on speaker.

Laundry half folded.

Laughing at something ridiculous.

Love became real
when ordinary stopped feeling
ordinary
because she was in it.

She Took Off the Armor

The first time she cried in front of me,
she apologized.

That broke my heart more
than the tears.

Who taught you softness
needed permission?

Who made you think pain
was a failure of strength?

Baby, put the armor down.

I am not here to attack
what you finally trusted me to see.

Stretch Marks and Testimonies

Do not hide the evidence.

That line says life happened here.

That scar says healing happened here.

That softness says time happened
here.

I am not searching your body
for proof you escaped living.

I love the testimony
written where perfection
never had a chance.

Grown Woman Beautiful

There is a beauty
that youth cannot manufacture.

It knows what it likes.
It owns good perfume.
It has survived enough
not to confuse attention with
affection.

She does not enter the room
asking, "Am I still beautiful?"

She enters knowing
beauty finally grew into her.

Sunday Hat, Saturday Heels

She can praise God Sunday morning
and dance Saturday night
without splitting herself in two.

Faithful does not mean flavorless.
Holy does not mean invisible.

She is scripture and lipstick,
prayer and perfume,
wisdom and rhythm.

I love the whole woman,
not just the version
other people find convenient.

When a Black Woman Finally Rests

The room gets quiet
when she stops carrying everybody.
At first she feels guilty.
Then she breathes.
No emergency.
No request.
No one calling her strong
while handing her more weight.
She closes her eyes.
The world survives.
And for once,
so does she
without having to save it.

MOVEMENT IV

BLACK MAN

BLACK LOVE, IN ANOTHER VOICE

Let the Black Man Be Soft

Do not confuse softness
with surrender.

A man can be dangerous to injustice
and gentle with the woman he loves.
He can carry weight
and still need somewhere to set it
down.

Let him laugh loud.
Let him cry without losing rank.
Let him say, "That hurt me."

Strength that cannot bend
usually breaks.

She Saw the Boy Inside Me

Behind the beard,
the bills,
the voice I learned to lower,
there was still a boy
who wanted somebody to say,
"I am proud of you."

She saw him.
Not to mother me.
Not to excuse me.

Just to understand
why some wounds still answered
when grown-man doors slammed.

I Need Holding Too

I know my shoulders are broad.
That does not mean
they never get tired.

Sometimes I do not need advice.
I do not need motivation.
I do not need another assignment
disguised as encouragement.

Sometimes, woman,
put your arms around me
and let the man who holds everybody
be held.

Strong Men Cry in Private

We were taught to hide water
as if tears rusted masculinity.

So we learned bathrooms,
parked cars,
showers running loud enough
to cover grief.

But a tear is not treason.
Pain does not become strength
just because nobody witnesses it.

I am learning to cry
without apologizing
for having a human face.

Love Me When I Am Not Producing

Do not only love me
when I am carrying something.

A paycheck.

A plan.

A family.

A solution.

Sometimes the strongest thing I can
do

is come home, sit beside you, and
admit,

"I am tired."

Please remind me

I belonged to love

before the check cleared.

My Hands Were Made for More Than Fighting

These hands learned defense early.

Fists before flowers.

Guard before embrace.

Then love taught them new work.

Holding a face gently.

Buttoning a child's coat.

Rubbing tired feet.

Folding laundry badly.

A man's hands can protect
without always becoming weapons.

The Weight He Never Mentioned

He carried it so quietly
people called him dependable.
Bills.
Fear.
Family expectations.
Old mistakes.
The pressure to never need rescue.
Then one evening she asked,
"What are you carrying that you
never say?"
He almost cried
at the existence of the question.

Black Man at Peace

Peace looked strange on him
at first.

No emergency.

No enemy.

No need to prove toughness
to people who did not know his name.

He sat on the porch,
coffee in hand,
woman he loved nearby.

For once, survival
was not the headline.

She Kissed the Warrior Off Duty

He came home still wearing the day.

Jaw tight.

Shoulders high.

Eyes scanning a room

that did not require defense.

She kissed him slowly

and said,

"You can put it down here."

No speech.

No fixing.

Just permission

for the warrior to become a man

again.

I Am More Than What I Provide

If the money stopped tomorrow,
would I still be worthy of tenderness?

That question lives
inside more men than admit it.

I want to provide.

I want to build.

But I also want a love
that knows my name
when my hands are empty.

When She Calls Me Handsome

I laugh it off sometimes.
Men are trained badly
at receiving sweetness.

But when she says,
"You look good, baby,"
something younger inside me
stands a little taller.

Compliments are not only for women.
A Black man can live years
without hearing beauty attached to
himself.

Say it again.
I am learning how to believe you.

Teach Me How to Receive Love

I know how to give until empty.
Receiving is harder.

Help feels like debt.
Kindness makes me suspicious.
Rest feels irresponsible.

So when you love me,
I sometimes reach for a reason
I must repay it.

Teach me the holy discipline
of opening my hands
and letting something good remain
there.

I Never Learned Tenderness

Nobody sat the boys down
and taught us tenderness.

We learned toughness by observation.
Learned silence from men
who had survived by swallowing.

Then you came along
and asked me to name feelings
I only knew as anger.

I am learning late,
but I am learning.
Love can be a language class.

Her Arms Became Permission

In her arms
I did not have to be impressive.
Not the leader.
Not the provider.
Not the answer.
Just a man breathing
against a woman who loved him.
Sometimes permission
is not a sentence.
Sometimes it is a place
where your body finally unclenches.

A Black Man Loved Correctly

Watch what happens
when a Black man is loved
without being controlled,
respected without being worshiped,
challenged without being humiliated,
and held without being weakened.

He grows.

He listens.

He becomes safer
for everybody around him.

Healthy love does not make a man
smaller.

It gives his strength
a better assignment.

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MOVEMENT V — STREET LOVE

Love on the Block

Corner Store Roses

We Kissed Beside the Basketball Court

Bus Stop Beautiful

Love in a One-Bedroom Apartment

Two Paychecks and a Dream

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Baby, Lock the Door

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We Became One Slowly
Touch Me Where the Hurt Used to Live
My Body Remembered Safety
I Gave You More Than Skin

Afterward, Hold Me
The Morning After Forever
Passion with a Promise

MOVEMENT V — STREET LOVE

Love where real life lives.

Love on the Block

We learned love where sirens interrupted sentences
and porch lights meant somebody was waiting.

You knew my people.
I knew which window was your mother's.
We had no skyline,
just brick, buses, corner stores,
and a little piece of sidewalk
where your hand kept finding mine.

The neighborhood taught us survival.
We taught each other softness.
And every time I walked you home,
I understood that love
can bloom through concrete
without asking permission.

Corner Store Roses

Couldn't afford the florist,
so I bought six roses from the corner store,
leaning in a plastic bucket
beside gum and lottery tickets.

The brother behind the glass asked,
“Special occasion?”

I said, “Special woman.”

You opened the door in an old T-shirt
and looked at those crooked flowers
like I brought you Paris.

Rent was almost due.
The refrigerator was half full.
But when you kissed me,
we were rich.

We Kissed Beside the Basketball Court

The game was still going,
men arguing over a foul
like history depended on it.

You stood outside the fence
with your arms folded,
pretending not to watch me watch you.

When I finally came over,
sweaty, breathless, laughing,
you said, “You think you something.”

I said, “I know you do.”

Then you kissed me
beside the basketball court,
and for one whole minute
the block lost its noise.

Bus Stop Beautiful

You were beautiful at the bus stop
without trying to be.
No spotlight. No entrance.
Just morning, work shoes, coffee,
and a face already tired of the day.

I loved you there—
in the ordinary.

Not only dressed up.
Not only photographed.
Not only when life behaved.

I loved the woman waiting on transportation,
checking the time,
carrying responsibilities in her purse,
and still making sunrise look underdressed.

Love in a One-Bedroom Apartment

We didn't have enough room
for all our dreams,
so we stacked them everywhere.

Some beside the bed.
Some on the kitchen table.
Some in envelopes marked PAST DUE.

We ate dinner close because the table was small.
We argued close because the walls were smaller.
We made up close because there was nowhere to run.

That one-bedroom apartment
was not our destination.
But baby,
it was the first kingdom
we built together.

Two Paychecks and a Dream

You brought your check.
I brought mine.
Neither one was impressive.

Still, we sat at the table
with bills, a calculator,
and a dream too stubborn to die.

We learned romance can look like budgeting.
Commitment can sound like,
“I’ll cover this one.”

Years later, people admired the house.
They never saw the nights
we built it first on paper
with two paychecks,
prayer,
and faith in each other.

Rent Due, Still in Love

The landlord did not care
that we were in love.
The light company wasn't moved
by our chemistry.

So we worked.
We stretched.
We sacrificed.
And sometimes we sat in the dark
by choice, saving power,
while you laid your legs across mine.

There are kisses poverty cannot repossess.
There are laughs no bill collector can garnish.

Rent was due.
So was hope.
We paid both.

Baby, Lock the Door

Baby, lock the door.
Not because the world is dangerous tonight,
but because I want one hour
where it cannot enter.

No phones.
No neighbors.
No headlines.
No family emergencies.

Just your head on my chest
and my hand moving slowly
across the peace of your back.

Sometimes love is not escape.
Sometimes it is choosing
who gets access
to the room where we recover.

Hood Rich

We were hood rich—
full tank on Friday,
food in the freezer,
new sneakers for the kids,
and enough left for takeout.

We knew how to celebrate twenty dollars.
How to make a date out of a drive.
How to turn music up
and call the living room a club.

Now we know more luxury,
but none of it tastes better
than those nights
when all we had was enough
and each other.

She Rode Shotgun

She rode shotgun
through every version of me.

Old car. New car.
Bad decisions. Better directions.
Windows down when the air worked,
windows down when it didn't.

She knew the route
before I knew where I was going.
And when I got lost,
she didn't grab the wheel.

She just said,
“Baby, turn around.”

That is love too:
somebody beside you
who lets you drive
but refuses to let you stay lost.

Chinese Food at 1 A.M.

At one in the morning
we were eating Chinese food
out of cartons on the bed,
arguing over which movie to watch.

Your hair was wrapped.
My shirt was somewhere on the floor.
Neither of us looked cinematic.

Still, I remember thinking:
if heaven has ordinary nights,
I hope they feel like this—
soy sauce, sleepy laughter,
your foot touching mine
under the blanket.

We Made Something Out of Nothing

They gave us almost nothing.
No blueprint for tenderness.
No inheritance worth mentioning.
Plenty of examples
of how love can go wrong.

So we became students.
We apologized.
We unlearned.
We saved money.
We stopped calling chaos passion.

Look at us now—
not perfect,
but peaceful.

We made something out of nothing,
then discovered
we had never been nothing at all.

Love Survived the Sirens

Sirens used to mean
somebody's night had changed.

We heard them through windows,
through arguments,
through sleep.

The city kept reminding us
how quickly life can turn.
So we stopped saving tenderness for later.

Kiss me now.
Say it now.
Come home now.
Forgive what can be forgiven.

Love survived the sirens
because we learned
tomorrow is never owed.

Front Porch Forever

Give me a front porch,
two chairs,
and you at seventy-five
still telling the story wrong.

Let the young folks walk by
and wonder how we lasted.

We will not tell them it was magic.
We will tell them
we stayed curious,
kept laughing,
apologized before pride hardened,
and never stopped dating the person
we had already married.

Forever does not need a mansion.
Sometimes it just needs
two chairs.

From the Projects to the Promise

We came from hallways
where everybody knew everybody's business
and elevators sometimes forgot their job.

We carried ambition down concrete stairs.
Carried groceries up.
Carried each other through.

The promise was never merely leaving.
It was becoming.

Becoming people who could return
without shame.
Becoming proof that beginnings
do not own endings.

From the projects to the promise,
I still want your hand in mine.

MOVEMENT VI — HIP-HOP LOVE

Rhythm, wordplay, swagger, and tenderness.

Boom-Bap Heartbeat

My heart got boom-bap
when you walk in.
Kick drum confidence,
snare on the two and four.

You don't enter rooms.
You drop verses in them.

And me?
I keep trying to act grown
while my pulse turns DJ,
cutting the same thought back:

There she go.
There she go.
There she go.

My Girl Got Bars

My girl got bars.
Not the kind you stream—
the kind that stop me mid-argument.

One sentence.
Clean delivery.
No profanity needed.

I be standing there
looking for a comeback
while she sips water like a champion.

Then later she kisses me
and says, “You know I love you.”

Yeah.
But you still won that round.

Love in 808s

Our love got bass in it.
You can feel us coming
before you understand the words.

Deep.
Low.
Built for the chest.

But underneath all that thunder
is melody—
the quiet way you check on me,
the way I pull your chair out,
the good morning text
that never needed an audience.

808s get attention.
The melody makes the song.

You Are My Favorite Verse

I've heard beautiful language.
I've memorized lines
that made rooms erupt.

Still, you are my favorite verse.

No rhyme scheme can duplicate
the way you say my name
when you mean come closer.

No metaphor has improved
on your hand finding mine.

If life is one long song,
baby,
you are the part
I keep rewinding.

Mixtape for My Woman

Side A:

the songs that made me think of you.

Side B:

the songs that made me miss you.

Hidden track:

the one I would never admit
made me cry in the car.

I made you a mixtape
because playlists are too easy.
I wanted love to require effort—
choosing, ordering,
knowing when one feeling
should fade into the next.

Our Love Got Samples

We got samples in our love.
A little of our parents' best.
None of their worst if we can help it.

A bass line from old-school soul.
A church chord from Sunday morning.
A laugh borrowed from our grandparents.

We took what survived,
flipped it,
added drums,
and made something ours.

Respect the source.
But don't be afraid
to make a new record.

Freestyle Me Forever

Don't script every moment.
Freestyle me.

Take the long way home.
Pull over for ice cream.
Dance in the kitchen
when the song is wrong.

Tell me you love me
in language you invented
five seconds ago.

Forever needs structure, yes.
But sometimes forever survives
because somebody still knows
how to improvise.

She Walked In on Beat

She walked in on beat
like the room had rehearsed for her.

Heel. Pause. Smile.
Bass line somewhere in my imagination.

I forgot the conversation
I was having.
Forgot maturity.
Forgot every smooth sentence
I had prepared for women like her.

She said, "You okay?"

I said, "Apparently not."

Love Louder Than the Bass

The bass was loud,
but I heard you say,
“Come here.”

Crowd moving.
Lights flashing.
Everybody performing cool.

You put your arms around my neck
and suddenly the club disappeared.

That's when I knew:
the loudest thing in the room
is not always sound.
Sometimes it is certainty.

Two-Step Theology

Maybe God smiles
when two grown people
who have survived too much
still know how to two-step.

Left. Together.
Right. Together.
Turn. Laugh.

No sermon tonight.
No complicated doctrine.
Just gratitude with rhythm.

If joy is holy,
then baby,
this dance floor
is an altar.

Old-School Slow Jam

Turn the lights down
and put on something
that knows how to wait.

No rushing to the chorus.
No skipping the bridge.

Come here.
Let the record crackle.
Let my hand rest
where your waist remembers me.

We are old enough to know
slow is not boring.
Slow is confidence.

You, Me, and That Record

There is a record
that does not belong to the artist anymore.
It belongs to us.

First apartment.
First real fight.
First dance after making up.

Every time those opening chords play,
I can see younger versions of us
trying to figure out forever.

We did not know much.
But apparently
we knew enough.

DJ, Run That Kiss Back

If a DJ could rewind a kiss,
I'd point to that one.

Not our first.
Our best.
The one in the kitchen
when we had been mad all day
and neither of us remembered
who moved first.

Run that back.
Again.
Again.

Some moments deserve
to be sampled forever.

Our Relationship Has a Soundtrack

Our relationship has a soundtrack.

Gospel for the mornings.

Hip-hop for the drive.

Jazz when company leaves.

Slow jams when the door locks.

A little blues for the years

we barely made it.

A lot of praise for the years

we did.

And somewhere between every genre

is your laugh—

the sound that keeps making

all of it ours.

Black Love Is the Remix

They handed us old stories
about what Black men are,
what Black women are,
and why we supposedly cannot stay.

We took that tired record
and remixed it.

More therapy.
More honesty.
More boundaries.
More affection.
More accountability.

Same Blackness.
New beat.

Watch us dance to something healthier.

MOVEMENT VII — GROWN & SEXY

Mature desire with confidence, humor, and restraint.

Come Closer

Come closer.
Not because I cannot see you.
Because distance has become unnecessary.

Sit where my knee can touch yours.
Let conversation lower its voice.
Let the room learn our silence.

I am not in a hurry.
I have lived long enough
to know anticipation
is part of the pleasure.

Come closer.
Let wanting
be unafraid to whisper.

That Dress Is Disrespectful

That dress is disrespectful.

Not to me—
to my concentration.

I had plans.
Thoughts.
A functioning vocabulary.

Then you walked by
and every responsible idea
left the building.

You asked, “How do I look?”

Woman, please.
You know exactly
what you have done.

Take Your Time with Me

Take your time with me.
I am not a destination
you need to reach quickly.

Kiss the pause.
Touch the trust.
Let your hands ask
what my body is ready to answer.

There is no prize for rushing.
No medal for arriving first.

I want the kind of closeness
that remembers
we are people
before we are passion.

Candlelight on Brown Skin

Candlelight loves brown skin.
It settles there
like it recognizes home.

Gold along your shoulder.
Warmth across your cheek.
Shadows moving softly
where my eyes have no business
pretending not to look.

You smile.
I get caught.

Neither of us apologizes.

Your Perfume Stayed Behind

You left,
but your perfume didn't.

It stayed on the pillow,
in the hallway,
on the collar of my shirt
like evidence.

I walked through the room
and there you were again—
not in body,
but memory with fragrance.

Some people leave a place.
Some people
change the air.

The Space Between Us Disappeared

There was a space between us
when the evening began.

A polite distance.
A responsible distance.
A we-are-grown-people distance.

Then laughter shortened it.
A hand on a shoulder shortened it.
One long look finished the job.

By midnight,
there was no space left
that either of us
wanted back.

Slow Dancing Without Music

No music was playing.
You were standing in the kitchen.
I put my hands around your waist.

You said, “What are you doing?”

“Dancing.”

“To what?”

“Us.”

You rolled your eyes
and leaned into me anyway.

Some rhythms
do not need speakers.

Your Hands Speak Fluent Me

Your hands know my language.
Not because they take.
Because they listen.

A shoulder when I am tense.
A palm against my chest
when words are too crowded.
Fingers tracing calm
into the back of my neck.

Touch becomes intimate
when it stops performing
and starts paying attention.

Kiss Me Like You Missed Me

Kiss me like the day was too long.
Like traffic offended you.
Like every meeting wasted time
you could have spent here.

Do not give me a polite kiss.
I have coworkers for politeness.

Come through the door
and remind me
that absence has consequences.

Married People Still Flirt

Married people still flirt.
At least these two do.

I still send the message
I would not want read aloud at church.
You still walk past me slowly
when you know I am looking.

A ring is not retirement.
Commitment did not cancel chemistry.

Baby, forever gets long
if nobody keeps winking.

I Like the Way You Look at Me

I like the way you look at me
when the room is full
and your eyes say
something nobody else can hear.

A private sentence.
A promise without punctuation.

I know that look.
It has gotten me in trouble
before.

I hope it does again.

Bedroom Eyes at Breakfast

It is seven-thirty in the morning.
Please stop looking at me like that.

There is coffee to make.
There are responsibilities.
We are respectable adults.

You keep smiling over your mug.

Now the toast is burning.

This is exactly
what I am talking about.

After the Children Go to Sleep

After the children go to sleep,
we remember our names
are not only Mom and Dad.

The house gets quiet.
We stop managing everybody else.

You sit beside me.
I touch your knee.
And two exhausted adults
find the lovers
who were there before the schedule.

Marriage needs those reunions.

The Art of Taking Our Time

We learned the art
of taking our time.

No proving.

No racing.

No borrowing urgency
from younger versions of ourselves.

A kiss can have chapters.

An embrace can be a conversation.

A night can unfold
without being forced.

Maturity taught us:
pleasure deepens
when presence does.

Tonight Belongs to Us

Tonight belongs to us.
Not the job.
Not the children.
Not the church committee.
Not the phone.

Us.

The people underneath the titles.
The lovers beneath the obligations.

Close the door.
Turn the world down.
Come sit beside me
until the only thing
that needs our attention
is each other.

MOVEMENT VIII — SACRED INTIMACY

Where trust, touch, vulnerability, and devotion meet.

Before We Make Love

Before we make love,
let me make sure your heart feels safe.

Tell me what kind of day you had.
Tell me if something hurt.
Tell me what you need
that has nothing to do with touch.

Desire is beautiful.
But I never want your body
to feel like a place
I entered without honoring
the person who lives there.

Love Me with Reverence

Love me with reverence.
Not fear.
Not worship.
Care.

Handle what I confess
as if it can break.
Protect the places
I expose only to you.

There are parts of a person
more naked than skin.

If I give you those,
hold them gently.

Your Body Is Not a Playground

Your body is not a playground
for my ego.
Not proof of conquest.
Not territory.

It is yours.
And every closeness we share
should begin with respect
and continue with listening.

Love does not say,
“You belong to me.”

Healthy love says,
“You are safe with me.”

Intimacy Without Shame

We closed the door
and left shame outside.

No apologies for being grown.
No pretending desire makes us dirty.
No using faith as a weapon
against tenderness.

We chose honesty.
Respect.
Consent.
Affection.

And discovered
that intimacy can be both passionate
and peaceful.

The Holiness of Being Known

There is holiness
in being known completely
and not abandoned.

You know my history.
My habits.
My weaknesses.
The things I wish I had done differently.

Still, you reach for my hand.

Maybe grace sometimes looks like
somebody learning the whole story
and choosing love
without pretending the story is perfect.

Naked Is More Than Skin

Naked is more than skin.

It is saying,
“I am afraid.”

“I was wrong.”

“I need you.”

“I do not know.”

Bodies can undress quickly.
Souls take longer.

The deepest intimacy came
when neither of us
had anything left to hide behind.

I Trust You This Close

I trust you this close.
Close enough to hear
my breathing change.
Close enough to notice
when confidence becomes uncertainty.

Close enough for me
to say slow down,
come closer,
not tonight,
or don't stop holding me.

Trust is what makes closeness
feel like freedom
instead of pressure.

When Desire Becomes Devotion

Desire says,
“I want you.”

Devotion adds,
“And I will care for you
after wanting has quieted.”

It brings water.
Pulls the blanket up.
Listens.
Remembers tomorrow's appointment.

Passion is fire.
Devotion is what keeps the house warm
after the flame settles.

We Became One Slowly

We became one slowly.
Not in a ceremony alone.
Not in a single night.

One bank decision.
One confession.
One hospital visit.
One forgiven mistake at a time.

Bodies can meet in minutes.
Lives take years to intertwine.

We became one
by repeatedly choosing
not to live like two strangers.

Touch Me Where the Hurt Used to Live

Touch me where the hurt used to live.
Not to reopen it.
To remind me
it no longer owns the room.

Put kindness where rejection sat.
Patience where fear slept.
Truth where somebody once lied.

Healing is strange.
Sometimes the place
that once made us flinch
becomes the place
we finally learn to rest.

My Body Remembered Safety

At first my body did not believe
what my mind was saying.

That you were safe.
That tenderness did not have a hidden price.
That closeness would not become control.

Then time kept proving you.

Gentle word after gentle word.
Boundary after respected boundary.

One day I leaned into you
without thinking.

My body had remembered safety.

I Gave You More Than Skin

I gave you more than skin.

I gave you context.

History.

Names of old wounds.

Reasons behind reactions.

I gave you the version of me
that does not come outside
for everybody.

So when you hold me,
understand:
you are holding information
my body alone could never tell you.

Afterward, Hold Me

Afterward, hold me.
Do not rush back to the world.

Let closeness have an ending
as tender as its beginning.

Rest your hand on me.
Say something ordinary.
Laugh if laughter comes.

Intimacy is not only
how we move toward each other.
It is how we remain
when the urgency is gone.

The Morning After Forever

Morning came quietly.
No movie music.
No dramatic sunrise.

Just you asleep beside me,
hair doing whatever it wanted,
one hand under the pillow.

I watched your face
and understood something simple:
forever will contain
far more mornings
than spectacular nights.

And I wanted those too.

Passion with a Promise

Give me passion with a promise.
Not a promise that desire
will always burn the same,
but that we will keep tending it.

We will speak.
We will listen.
We will learn each other's changing bodies.
We will not confuse familiarity
with permission to stop trying.

Let the promise make passion safer.
Let passion keep the promise warm.

MOVEMENT IX — CHRISTIAN LOVE

Faith, covenant, attraction, prayer, and grown love under grace.

God Knew I Needed You

I did not know your name
when I was asking God for peace.

I only knew
I was tired of confusing chemistry
with compatibility,
attention with affection,
and longing with love.

Then you arrived
without fireworks,
without a choir announcing you,
just steady, kind, and real.

And I understood:
sometimes answered prayer
does not fall from heaven.
Sometimes it walks through the door,
smiles at you,
and says, "How was your day?"

121

I Prayed for Somebody Like You

I prayed for somebody
who could love God
without using God to avoid intimacy.

Somebody who could pray with me
and still flirt with me.
Who could quote Scripture
and also say,
“Baby, you look good tonight.”

I prayed for laughter,
patience, attraction,
friendship, correction,
and peace.

Then you came imperfect,
human, beautiful—
not the fantasy I ordered,
but the partner I actually needed.

122

Church Pew Chemistry

I was trying to worship.
I really was.

Choir singing.
Hands lifted.
Preacher preaching
like heaven had opened.

And there you were
two seats down,
looking so good
in that Sunday dress
I almost needed
a different kind of altar call.

Forgive me, Lord.
But You made her.
I am simply appreciating
the craftsmanship.

She caught me looking
and whispered,
“Keep your eyes on Jesus.”

I said,
“I’m trying,
but one of His finest creations
keeps sitting beside me.”

123

Saved and Still Sexy

I love that we can pray
and still have pulse.

That holiness did not erase
the way your eyes find mine
across a crowded room.

We do not have to pretend
marriage turned desire off.

Faith taught us honor,
not numbness.
Covenant gave passion a home,
not a funeral.

So yes—
we can say grace over dinner
and still hurry home afterward.

Saved.
Committed.
Grown.
And very much alive.

124

Pray with Me Before You Leave

Before you leave,
pray with me.

Not because danger is guaranteed,
but because love remembers
the world can be heavy.

Put your hand in mine.
Speak my name before God.
Ask for wisdom over my decisions,
peace over my mind,
protection over my steps.

Then kiss me at the door
like you expect me back.

There is something powerful
about walking into the day
knowing somebody who loves you
has already covered you in prayer.

125

Covenant

Promise is easy
when the room is decorated.

Covenant begins
when the flowers are gone.
When somebody is sick.
When money is strange.
When attraction needs tending.
When forgiveness costs something.

Covenant is not staying
no matter what abuse occurs.
It is two healthy people
refusing to treat commitment
like a disposable cup.

It says:
we will tell the truth,
seek help,
change what harms us,
and keep choosing what builds us.

126

Love That Knows Scripture

Give me love
that knows Scripture
but does not weaponize it.

Do not throw verses
when I need listening.
Do not call control
“headship,”
or silence
“submission.”

Let the Word make us kinder,
more accountable,
more patient,
more truthful.

If our Bible knowledge
does not make home safer,
we have memorized letters
without learning love.

127

When God Is in the Middle

God in the middle
does not mean
we never disagree.

It means disagreement
does not become destruction.

It means pride gets interrupted
by conviction.
Cruel words get swallowed
before they become scars.
Apologies arrive sooner.

God in the middle
means neither of us gets to be God.

We are both teachable.
Both accountable.
Both loved.
Both learning how to love.

128

Sunday Morning Beside You

There is a tenderness
in seeing you Sunday morning,
half dressed,
Bible open,
coffee cooling beside you.

No stage.
No church smile.
Just you
trying to get your spirit together
before the world asks for you again.

I love you there—
in the ordinary holiness
of getting ready.

And when we walk into worship together,
I know the person beside me
is not just my date.
You are part of my testimony.

129

Worship with My Woman

I have danced with you
under dim lights.

I have held you close
while old slow jams
made memories out of minutes.

But there is another kind of intimacy
when I hear you worship.

When your voice cracks,
when your hands rise,
when you forget who is watching.

I get to see the part of you
that belongs first to God.

And somehow
it makes me love you more,
not because I own your faith,
but because I witness it.

130

He Covered Her in Prayer

He could not fix everything.

Could not fight every battle for her.

Could not silence every fear
or predict every turn.

So he learned another form
of protection.

He prayed when she slept.

Prayed before interviews.

Prayed when her mother was sick.

Prayed when she doubted herself.

And never used prayer
as an excuse not to act.

He showed up too.

Because covering someone
means heaven in your mouth
and responsibility in your hands.

131

She Prayed the Fight Out of Him

He came home carrying war
in his shoulders.

The kind Black men sometimes carry
without a uniform.

She did not interrogate him
at the door.

She touched his back,
let silence breathe,
then prayed softly.

Not to make him weak.
Not to make him hers.

She prayed until his jaw unclenched,
until his breathing slowed,
until home felt like home again.

Some nights love is not advice.
It is a safe place
for the armor to come off.

132

Two People, One Altar

We brought more than rings
to the altar.

We brought childhoods.
Debts.
Expectations.
Old wounds.
Family habits.
Private fears.

The miracle was never
that two people stood there.

The miracle would be
what we did afterward
with everything that followed us home.

So we keep returning
to that altar in smaller ways—
in apologies,
therapy,
prayer,
and the daily decision
to become worthy of the vows we made.

133

Marriage Is Ministry Too

Sometimes ministry
looks like a pulpit.

Sometimes it looks like
washing the dishes
because your partner is exhausted.

It is listening without preaching.
Keeping confidence private.
Being faithful when nobody applauds.
Making home a place
where both souls can breathe.

If I can bless strangers
but wound you carelessly,
my public gift has outrun
my private character.

Marriage is ministry too—
and home is the first congregation.

134

Till Heaven Calls One of Us Home

I do not want to think
about the last day.

But love this deep
eventually teaches us
that forever on earth
still has an ending.

So let me not waste Tuesday
because I assumed Friday.
Let me kiss you goodbye.
Say thank you.
Forgive quickly.
Take the trip.
Dance in the kitchen.

And if heaven calls one of us first,
let the one left behind
have a lifetime of evidence
that they were loved well.

135

MOVEMENT X — EXTREMELY FUNNY LOVE

*Because lasting love needs laughter, foolishness, and somebody
who knows where your keys are.*

Stop Stealing My Fries

I ordered medium
because I know you.

Not because I wanted medium.
Because history has taught me
that “I don’t want anything”
is not a legally binding statement.

You reach over casually,
like my fries are community property.

One.
Two.
Five.
Now you are seasoning them.

Baby, I love you deeply.
But somewhere in this relationship
there must be borders.

136

You Said You Weren't Hungry

I asked you.
This must be documented.

“Do you want anything?”

You said,
“No, baby. I’m good.”

So why,
woman of God,
are your hands
inside my French fries?

Why have you taken
three shrimp
and half my biscuit?

I surrender the plate
because after all these years
I finally understand:
there is no such thing as my food
when the woman I love
said she was not hungry.

137

Who Turned the Thermostat Down?

Our marriage has survived
real problems.

Bills.
Family drama.
Sickness.
Hard seasons.

But at 2:13 a.m.
I discovered the true enemy:
whoever turned this thermostat
down to sixty-six.

You are under three blankets
sleeping like royalty.
I am awake
paying for air conditioning
I cannot feel my toes in.

Love is patient.
Love is kind.
Love also owns sweatpants.

Your Side of the Bed Is a Lie

You keep saying
I am on your side.

Explain the mathematics.

Your pillow is here.
Your charger is here.
Your bonnet is here.
Your knee is somehow here.
And yet I am accused
of invading territory.

I woke up last night
with six inches of mattress
and a spiritual lesson
about sacrifice.

Apparently marriage means
two become one—
on my side of the bed.

139

Why Are There 47 Pillows?

I need somebody
to explain decorative pillows.

We cannot sleep on them.
We cannot lean on them.
Apparently I cannot move them
without instructions.

Every night we perform
a small furniture relocation
just to access the bed.

Then every morning
the pillows return
like they have union protection.

I married you for love.
I did not know
I was also marrying
a textile department.

140

Babe, Where Are My Keys?

“Babe, where are my keys?”

The national anthem
of our household.

I check the counter.
The chair.
Yesterday’s pants.
The mysterious drawer
where batteries and receipts go to die.

You watch me search
with the patience of a woman
who already knows.

Then you point.

They are in my hand.

Marriage is humbling.

141

Marriage Is Asking What We're Eating

At some point
romance becomes logistics.

Not less love.
Just more meals.

"What you want to eat?"

"I don't know."

"What about chicken?"

"No."

"Seafood?"

"Maybe."

Forty minutes later
we are still negotiating
like ambassadors at a peace summit.

This is marriage:
choosing one person forever
and still being unable
to choose dinner.

142

You Snore in the Spirit

You deny snoring.

Fine.

Let us call it
nocturnal praise.

A deep, rolling sound
from somewhere near your soul.

At 3 a.m.
you hit a note
that made me check
whether a truck had started outside.

Then you woke up and said,
“What?”

Nothing, baby.
Go back to worship.

143

Her Bonnet Has Entered the Marriage

There were two of us
at the wedding.

Later I learned
there was a third party.

The bonnet.

It has moods.
Colors.
Special seating arrangements.
Rules I was never given.

I used to think
romance meant satin sheets.
Now romance is kissing her forehead
under industrial-strength elastic
and still saying,
“Goodnight, beautiful.”

144

His Chair Is Apparently Sacred

Every man eventually develops
a chair.

Not a chair.
His chair.

Do not put laundry there.
Do not let company sit there.
Do not ask why the cushion
looks shaped like his life story.

He lowers himself into it
like a king returning to the throne.

And somehow,
from this sacred furniture,
he can fall asleep
before the opening credits.

145

The Argument We Had in Target

It began near housewares.

I said,
“We do not need another candle.”

You looked at me
like I had attacked your ancestors.

By aisle nine
we were debating spending habits,
communication,
and something I apparently said in 2019.

Then we passed snacks.
You grabbed my favorite.
I grabbed yours.

By checkout
we were holding hands again.

Target has seen things.

146

We Ain't Breaking Up Over Chicken Wings

We were both hungry.
That matters.

You said you ordered ten.
I counted nine.

Suddenly this became
a character issue.
A trust issue.
A “you always” issue.

Then we stopped.
Looked at each other.
And started laughing
until the waitress stared.

Black love has survived too much
to die over one missing wing.

We ordered ten more.

147

Love Is Watching Your Show Without Cheating

Real fidelity
is not only romantic.

It is staring at
“Next Episode”
while your partner is asleep
and choosing righteousness.

The temptation is strong.
The cliffhanger is evil.
You know they will never know.

But you remember the covenant.

So you turn it off.

This is maturity.
This is discipline.
This is love.

148

Date Night After 50

Date night after fifty
has different rules.

We still dress sharp.
Still smell good.
Still flirt.

But now we also discuss parking,
noise levels,
and whether the restaurant chairs
have back support.

We can be home by ten
and still call it a beautiful night.

Because grown love learned
that excitement does not require exhaustion.

149

Still Laughing at the Same Fool

You have heard my stories
seventeen times.

You know the punch line.
Know where I exaggerate.
Know which cousin was really there.

And somehow
you still laugh.

Maybe not because the joke is funny anymore.
Maybe because I am.

After all these years
I still love the sound
of being ridiculous
in a room where I am safe.

150

MOVEMENT XI — WHEN LOVE GETS HARD

*Conflict, repair, accountability, counseling, forgiveness, and the
decision to become healthier.*

We Almost Lost Us

There was a season
when love was still in the house
but neither of us could find it.

We spoke in defenses.
Slept in resentment.
Counted each other's failures
like unpaid bills.

We almost lost us
not because love disappeared,
but because pain became louder.

Saving us required more
than remembering good times.

It required truth,
help,
new habits,
and two people willing
to stop protecting their pride
more fiercely than their relationship.

151

Don't Weaponize My Vulnerability

If I tell you
where I am tender,
do not aim there later.

Do not take the story
I trusted you with
and turn it into ammunition
when you are angry.

Some words cannot be unheard.
Some betrayals happen
without another person in the room.

Love means knowing
where the weak places are
and guarding them—
even during war.

152

The Silent Treatment Has a Body Count

Silence can be peaceful.

And silence can be punishment.

There is a difference
between taking time to cool down
and making somebody beg
for proof they still exist.

We cannot heal
what we refuse to name.

So tell me you need an hour.
Tell me you need tomorrow.
But do not disappear
inside the same room
and call that communication.

153

Pride Slept Between Us

We went to bed
back to back.

Neither sleeping.
Both waiting.

I wanted you to reach first.
You wanted me to apologize first.

And pride lay between us
like a third body,
comfortable,
well-fed,
and ruining everything.

Finally I turned over.
Not because I was completely wrong.
Because being right
was getting lonely.

154

I Said Sorry Without a But

I used to apologize
like a lawyer.

“I’m sorry, but—”

Then came the evidence,
the explanation,
the reason your pain
was somehow also your fault.

One day I learned
the sentence could end.

“I’m sorry.”

No escape hatch.
No defense.
Just ownership.

The room became softer
when my apology finally stopped
trying to win.

155

You Hurt Me and I Still Love You

Both things can be true.

You hurt me.
I love you.

Love does not erase impact.
Pain does not automatically erase love.

The question is not
whether feeling survives.

The question is
whether trust can be rebuilt,
behavior can change,
and safety can return.

Sometimes love stays
and the relationship ends.

Sometimes love stays
and two people do the work.

Either way, truth must lead.

156

Learning How to Fight Fair

We had to learn
that disagreement is not permission
for cruelty.

No name-calling.
No threats to leave
just to create fear.
No bringing children into adult battles.
No humiliating each other in public.

Pause when needed.
Return when promised.
Attack the problem,
not the person.

Love is not proven
by never fighting.
It is revealed
by what we refuse to destroy
while we do.

157

Don't Make Me Beg for Communication

I should not have to audition
for basic clarity.

If something changed, tell me.
If you are hurt, tell me.
If you need space, tell me.
If you are unsure, tell me.

Do not make mystery
feel romantic.

Healthy love does not keep
the other person starving
for information
then call them needy
for asking to eat.

158

We Needed Counseling, Not Another Argument

We kept having
the same fight
with different nouns.

Money.
Sex.
Family.
Time.

But underneath
was the same wound
wearing new clothes.

We finally sat
with someone trained to hear
what we could not hear in each other.

Counseling did not mean we failed.
It meant we stopped pretending
love alone taught us every skill
we needed to keep love healthy.

159

Two Wounded People in One Bedroom

We loved each other
with old injuries
we did not create.

Your fear met my pride.
My distance met your abandonment.
Your anger met my silence.

Soon we were fighting ghosts
using each other's faces.

Healing began
when we stopped asking,
“Who started this?”

and started asking,
“What are we carrying
that keeps starting this?”

160

Forgiveness Is Not Amnesia

I forgive you
does not mean
I forgot.

It does not mean
trust instantly returned
or consequences disappeared.

Forgiveness releases vengeance.
Reconciliation requires evidence.

If we rebuild,
let it be with changed behavior,
clear boundaries,
and time.

Grace is not pretending
the wound never happened.
It is refusing to let the wound
become the only thing that happens next.

161

I Missed You While Sitting Beside You

You were right there.

Same couch.

Same room.

Same address.

But I missed you.

Missed the way we talked
before every sentence became logistics.

Missed being curious about you.

Missed touching without asking
what needed to be done tomorrow.

Distance is not always miles.

Sometimes it is two people

who stopped reaching
while their knees still touch.

162

Start Again with Me

Not from the beginning.
We know too much for that.

Start again from here.

With the lessons.
The scars.
The things we finally admitted.

Let us not romanticize
who we used to be.

Let us become better
than the couple who first fell in love.

Start again with me—
not because nothing happened,
but because something changed.

163

We Chose Us Again

There was no music.
No dramatic speech.

Just two tired people
at a kitchen table
saying,
“I still want this
if we can make it healthy.”

That sentence became a doorway.

We chose appointments.
Boundaries.
Hard conversations.
Date nights.
Honesty.

We chose us again,
this time with our eyes open.

164

Love After the Apology

The apology mattered.

But what came after
proved whether it was real.

Changed tone.
Changed habits.
Changed access.
Changed response.

I did not need you
to say sorry beautifully.
I needed tomorrow
to stop looking like yesterday.

Love after the apology
is where repentance
gets a body.

165

MOVEMENT XII — HEALING LOVE

*Breaking cycles, creating safety, learning peace, and loving
without repeating inherited pain.*

I Am Not Your Ex

Please see me.

Not the person who lied to you.
Not the one who disappeared.
Not the one who made affection
feel dangerous.

I understand why your body remembers.
Why certain pauses scare you.
Why unanswered calls
can become old stories quickly.

But I am here.
Let me earn trust
without serving a sentence
for somebody else's crime.

166

Stop Punishing Me for Who Hurt You

I can be patient
with your healing.

But healing cannot mean
I become the punching bag
for pain I did not cause.

Tell me what triggers you.
Let me understand.
Let me reassure where I can.

And also do your work.

Love can support recovery.
It cannot replace it.

I want to hold your hand
while you heal—
not be required to bleed
so your past feels balanced.

167

She Loved the Places He Hid

He knew how to be impressive.

Strong handshake.

Sharp clothes.

Answers ready.

She loved him there,

but not only there.

She loved the uncertain man,

the quiet one,

the one who sometimes needed

to hear, "You are enough today."

He had hidden those rooms

for years.

She did not invade them.

She waited until he opened the door.

168

He Did Not Ask Her to Shrink

He was not threatened
by her light.

Did not call her ambition
masculine.

Did not need her smaller
so he could feel larger.

He celebrated the room
when it learned her name.

And she never had to choose
between being loved
and being fully alive.

That was one of the ways
she knew the love was healthy:
her becoming did not require
his disappearing.

169

Safe Enough to Tell the Truth

The relationship changed
when honesty stopped feeling fatal.

“I am afraid.”

“I am jealous.”

“I need more.”

“I need less.”

“I made a mistake.”

“I do not agree.”

Truth needs consequences sometimes.
But it should not require terror.

We became safer
when both of us learned
that difficult honesty
is often the doorway
to real intimacy.

170

Healing Has a Witness

Some healing is private.

Some healing happens
while somebody kind
is watching you become different.

They notice
you did not shut down this time.
You asked for help.
You set the boundary.
You rested.
You stayed in the conversation.

Love does not take credit
for your healing.

It simply says,
“I see how far you have come.”

171

The First Time I Didn't Flinch

You raised your hand
to move a strand of hair
from my face.

And I did not flinch.

Such a small thing
that felt like a parade
inside my nervous system.

You did not know
what that moment meant
until I told you.

Then you kissed my forehead
without making my history
about your heroism.

You simply said,
"I'm glad you feel safe."

172

Loving Someone Through Therapy

I did not need you
to be my therapist.

I needed you
to respect the work.

Not mock the language.
Not feel threatened
when I learned boundaries.
Not complain
that healing made me different.

Of course it made me different.
That was the point.

Love me enough
to meet the healthier version of me
without mourning the version
that tolerated too much.

173

We Broke the Family Pattern

Nobody taught us this.

We came from homes
where love sometimes shouted,
withdrew,
endured,
or disappeared.

So we became students.

We learned apology.
Financial honesty.
Affection.
Boundaries.
Emotional language.

Our children may never know
how revolutionary their normal feels.

That is the victory.

174

I Refuse to Love You Like They Did

I inherited examples.
Not commandments.

So I refuse
to repeat every pattern
just because it has my family's accent.

I will not confuse jealousy with love,
control with protection,
silence with strength,
or suffering with commitment.

I can honor where I came from
without recreating
everything that hurt there.

175

Our Children Will See Better

Let them see us disagree
without disrespect.

Let them hear apologies.
See affection.

Watch a Black man cook dinner
and a Black woman rest
without anybody calling it weakness.

Let them see bills discussed,
therapy respected,
faith lived,
and laughter return after conflict.

We are teaching love
even when we are not speaking to them.

176

Tenderness Is Reparations in This House

The world has taken enough.

Enough softness.

Enough sleep.

Enough fathers.

Enough safety.

Enough time.

So in this house
we return something to each other.

A gentle voice.

A long hug.

Rest without guilt.

Touch without demand.

Peace without suspicion.

Tenderness cannot repay history.

But it can refuse
to let history collect interest
inside our home.

177

The Cycle Ends with Us

Somebody has to be first.

First to apologize differently.

First to stay faithful.

First to stop hitting.

First to stop disappearing.

First to talk about money.

First to get help.

First to choose peace
without calling it weakness.

Maybe nobody modeled it.

Then we will model it.

The cycle does not end
because we hate our people.

It ends because we love
who comes after us.

178

Love Without Survival Mode

At first peace felt suspicious.

No chaos to solve.
No emergency.
No guessing game.

My body kept waiting
for the catch.

Then months passed.
You stayed consistent.
Kindness remained kindness.
Quiet remained quiet.

I learned that love
does not have to keep me activated
to keep me interested.

Peace can be chemistry too.

179

We Learned Peace Together

We were both good at surviving.

Neither of us was naturally good
at resting.

So peace became practice.

Turning phones over at dinner.
Taking walks.

Not answering every provocation.
Saying no without guilt.
Sleeping without rehearsing tomorrow.

We learned peace together
like a new language.

Now sometimes
we sit beside each other in silence
and recognize fluency.

180

MOVEMENT XIII — LOVING AND BEING LOVED

*Reciprocity, receiving, safety, celebration, and the quiet luxury of
being known.*

Receive Me

You have been strong so long
you forgot love can come toward you.

Not as a debt.
Not as a test.
Not because you performed well.

Just because somebody sees you
and wants to give.

So open your hands.
Let me carry dinner.
Let me ask how you are
and stay long enough for the real answer.

You do not have to turn every gift
into something you must repay.

Sometimes love says,
“Here.”

And healing says,
“Thank you.”

181

You Don't Have to Earn My Love Today

You do not have to impress me today.

No perfect outfit.

No heroic answer.

No money story.

No smile borrowed for my comfort.

Come tired.

Come quiet.

Come unsure.

I am not saying love has no standards.

I am saying your humanity
is not a performance review.

Some days I will need your strength.

Some days you will need mine.

And some days
we will simply sit here
and be worthy
because we are here.

182

Being Chosen Feels Different

I have been wanted before.

Wanted for a night.
Wanted for convenience.
Wanted while I was useful.
Wanted until something shinier appeared.

But chosen?

Chosen feels quieter.
It remembers birthdays
and bad moods.
It learns your medicine schedule.
It asks what time you land.

Chosen is desire
with responsibility attached.

It is somebody looking at options
and still saying,
“I know what I have.
I am staying awake to it.”

183

Let Me Pour Back into You

You pour into everybody.

Children.

Parents.

Church.

Work.

Friends.

People who call only
when their cup is empty.

Baby, sit down.

Let me pour back.

Let me make the tea.

Rub the shoulders.

Handle the call.

Protect an hour of your evening
from everybody who thinks
your strength is public property.

Love should not only admire
how much you carry.

Love should help lighten it.

184

I Want to Know What Loving Me Feels Like to You

Tell me the truth.

What is easy about loving me?

What is difficult?

Where do I make you feel seen?

Where do I make you feel alone?

Do not give me the anniversary answer.

Give me the living answer.

I know how my intentions feel inside me.

I want to know

how my behavior lands inside you.

Love becomes mature

when curiosity survives familiarity.

So tell me.

I am listening

not to defend myself,

but to know you better.

185

Stay While I Become

Do not freeze me
in the version you first met.

I am still becoming.
So are you.

Some dreams will change.
Some habits must die.
Some friendships will move.
Some truths will cost us comfort.

Stay while I become,
not by tolerating harm,
but by making room for growth.

And I will not demand
that you remain familiar
just so I never have to learn you again.

Let us keep meeting
the people we are becoming.

186

You Deserve Reciprocity

You deserve more
than being everybody's safe place
while having nowhere to fall.

More than always initiating.
Always forgiving.
Always understanding.
Always reaching.

Love is not a one-person ministry.

It should return phone calls.
Return tenderness.
Return effort.
Return truth.

Not perfectly.
But faithfully.

You deserve a love
that knows how to receive you
and how to come back toward you.

187

I See Your Effort

I see the things
that do not photograph well.

You choosing a softer tone.
You remembering the appointment.
You checking your pride.
You asking the second question.
You coming home tired
and still making room for us.

Grand gestures are easy to post.
Effort often looks ordinary.

So before ordinary becomes invisible,
let me say it:

I see you trying.
I see you growing.
I see what this love costs you
and what it gives you.

Thank you.

188

Thank You for Loving Me Out Loud

Thank you
for not making me guess.

For the hand at my back.
The proud introduction.
The message that says
you made it home.

For saying my name kindly
when I am not in the room.

For affection that does not disappear
when witnesses arrive.

I do not need a parade.
I need clarity.

And you love me
with a language
my nervous system can hear.

189

I Never Knew Love Could Feel Safe

I thought butterflies
were proof.

Sometimes they were anxiety
wearing perfume.

I thought uncertainty
made love exciting.
I thought jealousy meant depth.
I thought peace meant boring.

Then you came consistent.

No disappearing act.
No punishment games.
No affection used as currency.

At first I did not know
what to do with calm.

Now I know:
my heart can beat fast from desire
without beating fast from fear.

190

Let Me Celebrate You

Not only birthdays.
Not only promotions.

Let me celebrate
the ordinary victories.

You rested when you needed rest.
You kept your word.
You set a boundary.
You finished the week.
You laughed after a hard season.

Come here.
Let me make a little noise
about your becoming.

The world is quick
to point out what is missing.

I want home to be a place
where somebody notices
what is growing.

191

Loved Without Performing

I took off the costume slowly.

The always-strong one.

The always-funny one.

The one who had an answer
for every emergency.

I waited to see
if your affection would change.

It did not.

You did not clap
when I became vulnerable.
You simply stayed present.

That is how I learned
being loved
is different from being applauded.

One wants the show.
The other wants you.

192

The Luxury of Being Understood

Luxury is not always expensive.

Sometimes it is saying half a sentence
and seeing recognition
in somebody's eyes.

It is not having to translate
every scar,
every joke,
every cultural reference,
every silence.

It is being challenged
without being misread.

Being understood
does not mean we always agree.

It means I do not have to disappear
inside explanation
before you can love me.

193

Home Is a Person Sometimes

I have lived in places
that never felt like home.

Good furniture.
Locked doors.
My name on the mail.
Still not home.

Then there is you.

A voice that lowers my shoulders.
A laugh I recognize from another room.
A hand I can find in the dark.

I know better
than to make one person
my whole world.

But I also know
sometimes home
is not an address.

Sometimes home says,
“You made it. Come in.”

194

You Loved Me Well

If our story ended tomorrow,
I would still be able to say:

you loved me well.

Not flawlessly.
Not without mistakes.

But with effort.
With repair.
With laughter.
With hands that learned
when to hold
and when to release.

You made room
for my whole humanity.

And because of you,
I know love is not only
what somebody feels.

It is how they make living beside them feel.

195

MOVEMENT XIV — BLACK LOVE, GROWN OLD

*Gray hair, mature desire, shared history, grief, laughter, and the
privilege of staying.*

Gray Hair and Good Loving

Your hair is changing color.
So is mine.

Good.

Let every silver strand
be evidence
that time found us together.

We have fewer illusions now
and better timing.

We know which argument
is not worth having.
We know which kiss
can end one anyway.

Gray hair does not frighten me.

I waited too long for a love
that could survive seasons
to complain when the seasons show.

196

Still My Girlfriend

After all these years
I still like calling you my girlfriend
sometimes.

Not because wife is too small.
Because girlfriend remembers
the spark.

The unnecessary phone calls.
The long drives.
The standing at the door
when neither of us wanted the night to end.

So come here, girlfriend.

Let this old husband
steal another kiss
like your father might walk in.

197

Meet Me in the Kitchen

Meet me in the kitchen
after everybody leaves.

The dishes can wait.

Put on that song
we used to play too loud.

No audience.
No special occasion.
Just socks on the floor
and your hand in mine.

We have danced in banquet halls.
We have danced at weddings.

But some of my favorite dances
happened beside a refrigerator
with leftovers cooling on the counter.

198

Sixty and Still Flirting

Do not tell me
flirting has an expiration date.

I still know what that look means.
You still know how to use it.

We may need reading glasses
to see the menu,
but I can see you just fine.

Come sit closer.

Let the young people think
we are too old for foolishness.

They will learn.

Desire does not retire
because the calendar gets bold.

199

Wrinkles Where I Kiss You

There are new lines
beside your eyes.

I love them.

Some came from worry.
Some from sun.
Some from laughing at me
when I was trying to be serious.

Let me kiss the evidence
of all the years
you kept showing up.

Beauty did not leave.
It changed languages.

And I have been with you long enough
to become fluent.

200

Our Bodies Changed, Our Fire Didn't

We do not move
exactly like we used to.

That is all right.

Love has learned pacing.
Desire has learned tenderness.
Touch has learned to ask
what feels good now,
not assume what felt good then.

Our bodies changed.

So did our wisdom.

And there is something beautiful
about two grown people
still curious about each other
after time edited the map.

201

You Still Make Me Nervous

You walk into the room
and sometimes
I still fix my shirt.

Ridiculous.
Beautiful.

After all these years
there are moments
when you look at me
like the first date is happening again.

My confidence forgets itself.

I hope we never become
so familiar
that wonder becomes rude enough
to leave.

202

Rocking Chairs and Inside Jokes

I want the rocking chairs.

Not because I am in a hurry
to get old.

Because I want enough years with you
to collect jokes
that require forty minutes of history
to explain.

I want grandchildren rolling their eyes
while we laugh too hard
at something from 1998.

Give me a porch,
your hand,
and a lifetime of references
only we understand.

203

I Remember Your Young Face

Sometimes I look at you now
and see every version at once.

The young face.
The nervous smile.
The year we almost broke.
The year we rebuilt.

Time has layered you
without erasing you.

I do not love you
in spite of age.

I love having witnessed
the archive.

204

Dance with Me Slowly

The song is slower now.
Maybe we are too.

Good.

Come close.
No spinning required.
No performance.

Let your cheek rest here.

We have spent enough years
racing schedules,
raising families,
chasing goals.

Tonight
let four minutes be enough
for nothing but us.

205

We Buried People Together

Love is not only vacations
and photographs.

We buried people together.

Sat in hospital rooms.
Made casseroles for grieving families.
Drove home in silence
after bad news.

You learned how I mourn.
I learned when not to speak.

Somewhere in all that loss
our love became heavier
and more precious.

We understood:
there is no guarantee
except the way we choose
to be present today.

206

Our Love Outlived Seasons

There were winters.

Not every year was spring.

Some seasons required blankets,
patience,
and faith that warmth would return.

It did.

Then summer came
and taught us not to take sunlight
for granted.

Our love outlived seasons
because we stopped demanding
that every season feel the same.

207

Aging Beside You Is a Privilege

The culture sells youth
like age is a failure.

But look at us.

Still here.
Still learning.
Still touching.
Still calling each other
when we leave the doctor.

Aging beside you
is not something I endure.

It is access
to chapters of you
I could never have met
if we had not stayed long enough.

208

If I Get There First

If I get there first,
do not turn our love
into a room you can never leave.

Grieve me.
Talk about me.
Laugh at the foolish things I did.

But live.

Eat good food.
Take the trip.
Let sunlight find you again.

The greatest proof
that you loved me
will not be dying beside my memory.

It will be carrying what was beautiful
forward.

209

Find Me Again in Heaven

If heaven keeps recognition,
find me.

I do not know
what eternity looks like.

But if there is a crowd,
listen for my laugh.

If there is music,
meet me near it.

And if love on earth
was only rehearsal
for something we cannot yet imagine,
then after all these years
of choosing you here,
I will know exactly
who I am looking for.

210

MOVEMENT XV — THE MANIFESTO

A closing call to healthy, accountable, joyful, enduring Black love.

Black Love Is Revolutionary

In a world that profits
when we distrust one another,
healthy Black love is resistance.

Not because romance alone
will heal a people.

But because two whole people
learning truth,
faithfulness,
friendship,
accountability,
and peace
create something exploitation hates:

a home that is difficult to divide.

Love is not the revolution by itself.

But love that builds
can become revolutionary.

211

We Deserve Healthy Love

Not just intense love.
Not just familiar love.
Not just love that photographs well.

Healthy love.

Love with boundaries.
Consent.
Communication.
Joy.
Safety.
Mutual responsibility.

We have survived too much
to romanticize suffering
inside our own homes.

We deserve passion
that does not require pain
to prove it is real.

212

Our Children Are Watching

They are watching
how we speak when angry.

How we divide work.
How we apologize.
How affection lives in the house.
How money becomes conversation
or warfare.

They are learning love
without taking notes.

So let us give them
a better curriculum
than the one many of us inherited.

213

Build the House Different

If the old blueprint
produced fear,
we do not owe it loyalty.

Build the house different.

Put truth in the foundation.
Boundaries in the walls.
Laughter in the kitchen.
Prayer where it belongs.
Therapy where it is needed.

Put affection in plain sight.

Let sons see tenderness.
Let daughters see respect.

Build something
our descendants do not have to heal from.

214

Love Is Also Discipline

Love is feeling.
And love is practice.

It is turning down temptation
when nobody would know.

It is controlling the mouth
when anger wants a weapon.

It is making the appointment.

Keeping the promise.

Coming home emotionally too.

Passion may start the fire.

Discipline keeps the house warm
without burning it down.

215

Protect What We Built

Protection is not possession.

It is guarding trust.
Guarding privacy.
Guarding time together
from a world that will spend all of it.

It is refusing to entertain
what threatens the covenant.

It is knowing
not every friend deserves a vote
in our relationship.

Protect what we built
not with control,
but with boundaries
and shared allegiance.

216

We Don't Have to Repeat History

History explains.
It does not have to command.

We can study what happened
without making pain our inheritance.

We can tell the truth
about broken families,
violence,
economic pressure,
racism,
absence,
and survival.

Then we can ask a harder question:
what will we do now?

We honor our ancestors best
not by repeating every wound,
but by building what they deserved too.

217

Black Men, Love Black Women Well

Love her strength
without requiring it every hour.

Love her ambition
without competing with it.

Hear her no.
Honor her yes.
Do not call control protection.
Do not demand softness
while bringing danger into the room.

Be affectionate.
Be accountable.
Be teachable.

And remember:
to love a Black woman well
is not to worship her.

It is to meet her
as a full human being
and bring your full humanity too.

218

Black Women, Let Good Men Be Human

Do not require a good man
to be invulnerable
in order to remain desirable.

Let him say he is afraid.
Let him need comfort.
Let him learn.
Let him fail without humiliation
when the failure is human
and repairable.

Hold standards.
Keep boundaries.
Demand respect.

And leave room
for tenderness in both directions.

A man should not have to choose
between being loved
and being human.

219

Let's Become Home for Each Other

Not cages.
Not hiding places
from the work we each must do.

Home.

A place where truth can enter.
Where desire can breathe.
Where laughter is frequent.
Where correction does not become contempt.

Let us become home
without losing ourselves.

Two whole people.
Two histories.
Two freedoms.
One chosen shelter
against the weather.

Come in.
I kept a light on for you.

220

BLACK LOVE IS STILL HERE

They wrote about our brokenness
so often
some of us forgot
we also know how to love.

But I have seen us.

Black men opening doors.
Black women speaking life.
Old couples walking slowly
through grocery stores
with fifty years between their fingers.

Young lovers learning better
than what they witnessed.
Families rebuilding.
Men apologizing.
Women resting.
People going to counseling.
People praying together.
People kissing in kitchens.

Do not tell me Black love is dead.

Sometimes it is wounded.
Sometimes tired.
Sometimes carrying generations
of things nobody taught us
how to heal.

But dead?
No.

Black love is still breathing.
Still touching.
Still praying.
Still laughing.
Still desiring.
Still building.
Still becoming.
Still choosing.

And somewhere tonight,
a Black man is looking at a Black woman,
a Black woman is looking back,
and both of them know:

After everything this world
has tried to take from us,
we still have the audacity
to love.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lucius Alston is an author whose work explores faith, Black life, relationships, healing, discipline, purpose, and personal transformation. In *Black Love: The Poetry of Us*, he turns to poetry to celebrate the full range of love between Black men and Black women - the mind, the friendship, the laughter, the faith, the desire, the wounds, the repair, and the decision to keep building.

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