

The Sun Bird and Fatuma

By

Dina Mousa

## Chapter One

### The Myth

In a small village in Kenya, in a small shack, there lived a little girl, Fatuma. Like all kids her age, she loved playing and running around.

Fatuma only had a few toys. She only had one doll, but she was as happy as a princess could be. She also loved reading and listening to folk stories.

One night Fatuma laid down on her mat and hugged her doll, made from an old piece of cloth and stuffed with cotton. A few school books were on the floor close to her mat.

Fatuma opened the window above her, lay flat and closed her eyes. She heard her mother's sweet voice telling a bedtime story.

“Ngai made Kiriinyaga mountain as high as the sky so humans could climb up and touch the clouds and the heavens could be reached. One day Ngai sat on the summit of the mountain and saw a herd of buffalo swimming in the river under the waterfall and the green trees surrounding them; white doves flew, spreading their wings.

The buffalo were free and safe, enjoying the sun on their skin while birds stood on their backs. That was when Ngai decided to create a haven for animals, a forest where animals shall live in peace, free, safe, and with no harm.” Fatuma yawned. “My little angel is sleepy. Good night, honey.” The mom kissed Fatuma's cheek.

Fatuma opened her eyes, but her mom was gone. Her tears dropped, and she touched her cheek where her mom had kissed her. “Good night, mom.”

The sun rose over the shack. James, Fatuma's dad, was a big, strong man, with a rough face and sunburned skin. James walked into the shack. “Rise and shine, sweetheart.”

“Good morning, dad.”

James looked around him. "You haven't packed yet?"

Fatuma sat on her mat, holding her doll. "I don't want to move again."

"We talked about that before, didn't we?"

"We've been moving a lot. I like this shack, and I want to have friends."

"My work requires us to move. If we don't move, we don't eat."

"Dad....."

James didn't give her a chance to say what she wanted. "You've got ten minutes to pack," he said, leaving the room.

Fatuma packed her books and the two dresses she had. As she left the shack, she was sad and looked at the shack for the last time. "Goodbye."

James waited for his daughter in his old, broken-down pickup truck. He honked. "We must leave soon to reach the village before dark."

Fatuma got in, and he drove away. The little girl looked at the road through the window. Hours passed on the road, and she hadn't said a word.

"Are you angry at me?" asked James.

"I'm thinking about my new school."

"The school is a bit far from our new shack."

"It's okay as long as I'm going to learn new things."

James petted her head with a smile. "You're a smart girl."

"Just like my daddy."

James drove all day. By nightfall, he stopped the truck in front of their new shack. Fatuma was sleeping in her seat.

"We're here. Wake up."

Fatuma opened her eyes. She yawned a big one and looked at the shack but couldn't see it well.

The truck's light needed to be brighter.

The new wooden shack was in a remote village. A water pump stood a few meters away. They got out of the truck.

“You go inside, and I will bring the boxes in.”

Fatuma put her hands on a box. “I want to help you.”

“I said to go inside,” he growled.

“I'm sorry.” Fatuma went inside the dark shack and sat on the floor. James followed her in. He lit a gas lamp and sat next to her. “I'm sorry. I didn't mean to sound angry.”

“I just wanted to help you.”

“I know. The box you wanted to carry has fragile things. I was worried you might drop it and break it.”

“We don't have any fragile things.”

“It belongs to my new boss.”

“The farm owner.”

“That's right. If we break his box, we must pay for it.”

Fatuma put the mat on the floor. “It's bedtime.”

“Not before you have dinner.”

“We don't have food.”

“Said who?” James unbuttoned his shirt and took a plastic bag out of it. The bag had two pieces of bread. He gave her one, and he had the second piece.

“I love you, daddy.”

“I love you too.”

They slept their first night in the new place. With the first ray of sun, Fatuma woke up. She was very excited. She got dressed and brushed her hair.

“Dad, wake up, wake up.”

James opened his sleepy eyes. “What time is it?”

“5:30.”

James closed his eyes. “Get out of here and let me sleep.”

“I want to go to school.”

“Then go and let me sleep.”

“I don't know the way.”

“It's too early. The school isn't open yet.”

“You said the school is far from here, so it will be open by the time we get there.”

James sat up on the mat. “I will drive you there, but I won't be able to pick you up. You will have to come back alone.”

“Okay, I will remember the way. Now, let's go.” She pulled his hands up.

“Go and wait in the truck.” He said, smiling.

James dropped Fatuma off in front of the school, which looked like a slightly bigger shack. “See you later, dad.”

“Do you remember the way home?”

“Yes.”

James drove away. The school wasn't open yet. There was a lock on the door. Fatuma sat on the front steps of the school. She looked at all the beautiful nature around her and listened to the birds chirping. Kiriinyanga could be seen from the village. She closed her eyes and listened to the breeze shaking the leaves.

Then she heard a voice saying, “It's a new girl.” It was one of the students who gathered in front

of the school.

“Hello,” Fatuma said.

The teacher unlocked the door, and the students hurried inside. No one talked to Fatuma. In the small classroom, the students sat on the few cushions on the floor.

The teacher wrote good morning on the blackboard hanging on the wall.

“Good morning, teacher.”

“We've got a new student. Please introduce yourself.”

Fatuma stood before the class. “I'm Fatuma. My dad and I just moved here.”

“What does your dad do?” A student asked.

“He is a truck driver. He moves fruit and vegetables from the farms to the market.”

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” the teacher asked.

“I want to be a doctor.”

The students laughed at her. How could a poor girl grow up to be a doctor? Fatuma looked at the girls' faces and didn't understand why they were laughing.

“Stop laughing,” the teacher told the girls, then he asked Fatuma a question. “Why do you want to be a doctor?”

“I want to help sick people and reduce their pain.”

“I'm sure you will be a great doctor. Please sit down.”

Fatuma sat on a cushion. “Now, let's start our lesson,” the teacher said, and the little eyes looked at him.

After school, the girls got together to play before they went home. “Fatuma, do you want to play with us?”

“Yes, what game are we playing?”

“We will catch dragonflies. We will have an empty can from the trash over there and keep the

dragonflies she caught inside it. The girl who catches more dragonflies will win.”

“Fatuma, you will count them and be the judge.” Another girl said.

“Okay.” Fatuma picked up five cans and put them on the ground upside down. The girls ran, chasing dragonflies. Every minute the girls returned and carefully placed their catch under the can so the dragonflies wouldn't fly away. Fatuma was having fun watching the girls running around.

“Fatuma, here's my dragonfly. Put it in my can.”

Fatuma held the dragonfly gently, and the other girl ran. “Do you have a name, little one?” she asked, smiling. Her bright smile soon disappeared once she lifted one side of a can. She saw ants devouring a dragonfly. “No, no, no.” She let the dragonfly in her hand fly away. Fatuma moved all of the cans. “You're free to fly.”

All of the dragonflies flew away. Fatuma tried to rescue the dragonfly that lay on the ground. She moved the ants off his body, but it was too late. “I'm sorry.”

The girls came back and looked at the ground. There was nothing. “Where are the cans and the dragonflies?”

“I set them free.”

“Why did you do that?”

“Ants ate a dragonfly under the can.”

“So? We are just playing.”

“Your game is cruel.”

“Go away. We don't want to play with you.”

“I'm the one who doesn't want to play with you,” Fatuma said, walking away, and heading home. She walked a long distance. She couldn't stop thinking of the poor dragonfly as she walked into the woods. She was so sad that she didn't pay enough attention to the road and took the wrong turn. Fatuma walked in the forest for hours. Her legs were tired, and she knew that she was lost. She couldn't

see the road, only thick trees all over the forest. Fatuma didn't give up. She tried to find her way out. She couldn't walk further by nightfall, so she rested under a tree. She heard scary voices coming from every corner of the forest. Roaring lions, gorillas fighting one another, and glowing-eyed bats flew over her. Fatuma's heart pounded.

The moonlight was the only light she had. Something was moving towards her. She couldn't see it. Her little body shook like a leaf, and she cried. She looked at the moon's rays coming through the branches. "Mom, Dad said you would always be there with me and watch over me from the sky. Are you there now.? Can you see me? Mom, I'm scared; please help me. Mom."

The thing was getting closer to Fatuma. She curled up in a ball and closed her eyes. At that moment, something magical happened.



## Chapter Two

### The Magical Forest

As Fatuma cried and curled up in a ball, her body lifted as if floating in the air. After a terrified landed on the ground. She was very scared to open her eyes to what was happening around her.

“You're safe now. Open your eyes,” a sweet voice said.

Fatuma opened her eyes and saw a bright sun in the middle of a clear blue sky and green trees in fall bloom, trees she had never seen before. There were lakes of milk, and the flowers' perfume flowed to her nose.

“Where am I? I must be in heaven.”

“Hello,” the same voice said again.

Fatuma looked around her, but there was no one. “I can't see you. Show yourself.”

“Hi.” The sunbird flew out of the branches. His feathers were golden, and they were gold indeed.

Fatuma looked at the bird. She couldn't believe it. She looked around her again. “Where are you?”

“You're looking at me.”

Fatuma looked at the sunbird and thought her ears were deceiving her. “You're a talking bird?”

“Yes.”

Fatuma closed her eyes, and covered her ears with her hands. “I'm crazy.”

The sunbird touched her hands with his wings. “This is real.”

Fatuma opened her eyes and looked around her again. “What is this place?”

“It is a forest.”

“No, there's no forest that looks like this. The forest was dark and scary a few minutes ago. This

is a different place.”

“This is a sanctuary forest. A place where all living creatures are safe.”

“How did I come here?”

A deer peeked from between the trees and answered her. “We heard your cries and prayers for help, so we let you in.” Then the deer came out from the bushes.

“Let me in?”

“There is an invisible door between the two forests, the sunbird said.

The deer walked to Fatuma, and rubbed his head against her hand. “I like you.”

Fatuma hugged the deer. “I like you, too.”

The deer ran around all the corners. “This girl is very nice. Come out, everybody.”

In a blink of an eye, all of the animals of the forest came out of their hiding places. The hippos climbed out of the milk lake. The white rocks moved and turned into white rhinos. Butterflies shaped like leaves flew above her head. Blue cranes walked elegantly by the lake. A family of elephants - a dad, a mom and a baby- walked in between their legs. Giant, strong gorillas climbed down the mountain. A cheetah played with her cubs. A lion with a big mane walked side by side with his lovely lioness.

Seeing all of those beautiful animals up close made Fatuma happy. “Where are the people?”

“The humans are forbidden to enter our forest.” The sunbird answered.

“But I'm a human.”

“You're different; your heart is pure.”

“We couldn't stand hearing you crying. We had to break the rule,” The lion said.

The animals looked at the sunbird. “The soul of the forest, and we all decided to let you in here.” The hippo said.

“You're the soul of the forest!” Fatuma had heard of lion kings before but never heard of a bird

king of the forest.

“The sunbird's soul is holy as he is ancient and the last of his kind.” The lion explained.

Fatuma looked at the sunbird. “Something that beautiful has to be rare.”

The deer rubbed his head against her arm again. “Come and play chase with us.”

“I'm late. I have to go home. How do I get home?”

“Get out through the door, and you will find yourself in the jungle again, walk straight, then turn right and you will be home.”

“I don't see any door.”

“Just walk this way.” The sunbird said, smiling.

The lion wasn't comfortable with a human knowing their magical secret. “Sunbird, the girl must vow before she leaves.”

“Fatuma, you have to promise you will never tell anyone about us.”

“I promise you that your secret is safe with me, the soul of the forest.”

Fatuma walked through a door that she couldn't see. She came out of the dark forest and looked behind her, but she couldn't see the heaven forest.

Fatuma ran home. James was waiting for her in front of the shack. He was pacing. He was pounding his fist.

“Dad.”

“Where have you been?” He shouted.

“I.....I.... .”

“I looked everywhere for you.”

“I got lost in the woods and couldn't find my way.”

James hugged her so tightly, “I was worried about you.”

“I'm sorry.”

“I can't lose you too.”

“I'm here, Dad. I found my way home.”

“Let's get inside. You must be tired and need to rest.”

James and Fatuma went inside the shack. She lay down on her mat. The magical forest was the only thing on her mind. Until that moment, she wasn't sure if it was real or if it all was a dream. She smiled happily.

“Why are you smiling?”

“I remembered a story mom told me.”

James' heart was heavy. He sighed, and his eyes went sad. He missed his beloved wife. “She was a great woman.” And he closed his eyes.

Back in the magical forest where the sun never sets, the elephant asked the soul of the forest, “Do you trust her?”

“I do. She will keep the secret.”

“How could you be sure?”

“I just am. I saw the sincerity in her eyes.”

All the animals looked at the sunbird, hoping he was right about the girl. Some animals trusted Fatuma, and some said she was a stranger who might be a threat someday. However, all of them listened to the sunbird.

The following morning, Fatuma went to school. “Good morning,” she greeted the girls, but they didn't reply. They ignored her and turned their faces away. Fatuma sat on her cushion and opened her book. After school, she ran to the forest. She stood in the same spot where the sunbird had found her before. “Please let me in.”

She knew what she had to do. She closed her eyes, walked through the invisible gate, and was in heaven again.

“Thank you.” Fatuma looked at the bright sun with a big smile on her lips. The animals came out to play with her. She played a little, and then she climbed the highest tree. She sat on the top branch with a spectacular view of all the forests under her. The sunbird landed on her shoulder. The gold bird was flying high towards the sun. After all, he did come from the sun. “You came back.”

“And you let me in.”

The sunbird looked at the sun. “Hundreds of years have passed since I came here, and I've never grown bored of looking at the sun and flying to it.”

“My mom used to like sitting in the sun and feeling its warmth on her body.”

“What happened to your mom?”

“She got sick, and after a while, she passed away.”

“I'm sorry.”

Fatuma looked at the sky and smiled happily. “I know she is there looking after me.” Then she asked, “Do you have parents?”

“I had parents once.”

“Where are they now?”

“In ancient times, my family was sacred in many African places. People loved us and built beautiful temples for us. Then people changed. Our gold blinded them. They couldn't see our souls. They hunted us down, seeking fortune. Some of them thought capturing us would give them magic powers. People killed us one by one until I became the last one of my kind.”

“Is that why humans aren't welcomed here?”

“All of us here are protected from people. We are safe from their evil acts and greed.” He looked at the sun. “The last time I saw my mom, she was flying happily. She spread her golden wings that shone under the sun. She chirped the sweetest melody. Then she was captured. I came here sad and lonely. I lived here for thousands of years until the forest, and I became one soul. Here I found

happiness and family.”

“Yesterday, when I entered the forest, it was the first time I felt peace since my mom was gone.”

Fatuma and the sunbird sat on the branch for hours, peacefully watching the sun. After a happy afternoon, she went home and started doing her homework.

James came home carrying bags in his hands. “How was school?”

“It was great. I learned new things. After school, I played with my friends.”

“It sounds like you had a good day.” He put down the bags.

“I smell food.”

“I got paid today, so I bought a delicious dinner, and I bought this for you.” He handed her a bag.

Fatuma opened it and smiled a bright smile. “This dress is for me.”

“Yes. It's brand new.”

Fatuma hugged him. “I love you, daddy.”

“I love you more.”

She put her new dress on. “How do I look?”

“Beautiful. You're the most beautiful girl.”

“I love this village; I want to live here forever.”

“We aren't going to move soon. There is plenty of work for me here.”

They had a lovely dinner. Fatuma slept with her new dress on. James was happy that he had put a smile on his daughter's lips.

Days went by. Fatuma always visited her friends in the forest. They had a date every day after school. She was always welcomed there. It was where she belonged. Fatuma gained the love of all the animals, even those who were suspicious initially. She was trusted. Her time in the forest was always filled with joy. She raced with the gorillas to the top of the mountain, she played with baby elephants,

and they used their trunks and splashed her with water. Fatuma and the sunbird became best friends.

They sat on the branch and talked. Fatuma ran, and the sunbird flew above her.

One night Fatuma was sitting on the floor studying. James came home. He looked tired.

“You're late.”

“I'm sorry, sweetheart. I had much work today.” He sat to rest.

“Are you okay, daddy?”

“Yes, I'm all right. I need to wash up.”

“I'll bring you some water.”

“Thanks.”

Fatuma took a bucket and went out to the water pump. The truck was parked just a few steps away. After she pumped some water and was about to return to the shack, she saw a big piece of thick cloth covering the back of the pickup truck. Fatuma was curious. She wanted to know what was under the fabric. She thought it might be fruit. She put the bucket down and got very close to the back of the truck. Blood dripped down on the ground. Fatuma was afraid, but she had to see what was there. She removed the cloth, and what she saw made her wail.

## Chapter Three

### The Bond

James heard Fatuma's screams. He rushed out of the shack. Fatuma stood still, staring at the rifle and a chainsaw beside the elephants' tusks.

“Fatuma, are you okay?”

She didn't answer. She didn't look at him. James looked at the truck and knew his daughter had discovered what he did for a living.

“Fatuma.”

She turned her face to him. Her small face was covered with bitter tears. “You're a poacher.”

James couldn't look straight into her eyes. “My dad is a murderer.” Fatuma's heart was heavy. She wished it was a nightmare that would end with waking. But it was a harsh reality.

“I'm not a murderer. They're just animals.”

“They are the soul of the forest.”

“I had to do it to survive. If I had had money, your mom would be alive now.”

“My mom would never have approved of killing animals for money.”

“We need food. We need medicine if one of us gets sick. You need dresses.” He pointed at the new dress she was wearing.

Fatuma looked at her dress and saw stains of blood on it. She couldn't stand that horrible thought. She ran inside the shack, removed her dress, and wore an old torn dress. She hugged her doll and laid down on the mat, and her tears didn't stop.

James couldn't face his daughter. He sat in front of the shack, looking at the tusks, and listened to her crying all night.



In the following days, Fatuma locked herself in the shack. She didn't go to school and stopped going to the forest. She hadn't eaten a bite of food, either, since she had learned where the money came from. She just sat on the floor, looking at the open window.

James came in. He put some food on the floor. "Come on, baby, you have to eat something, or you'll starve."

"I'd rather starve than eat food you bought doing that job."

"We can talk about that later, but now you have to eat."

Fatuma didn't reply. She just looked out the window.

"You stopped going to school. You don't eat. You don't sleep. How about we go to the town tonight?"

"I don't want to see people."

"Are you ashamed of being seen with me? Are you ashamed of your father?"

"I used to be so proud of you." Her tears dropped.

"Stop saying killer. I didn't kill people."

"Look outside the window and tell me what you see on the tree."

James looked at the tree and saw a mother monkey breastfeeding her baby, cuddling the young one with her arms. After the baby fed, he jumped on the branches, fell, and hit the ground. Mama monkey jumped down, hugged her baby, and checked his little body to ensure he wasn't hurt. The baby clung to his mom's belly and went up the tree again.

"She cares for the baby, just like mom used to look after me."

James left the shack. Fatuma didn't even look at the food her father left. She stared at mama monkey and baby monkey.

Fatuma's friends in the forest were worried about her. "She's never missed a day before," the

cheetah said.

“Four days now,” the deer replied.

“Maybe she is sick.” The leopard said, trying to find an excuse.

The sunbird looked at the sun. “There is one way to find out.”

The animals looked at each other. They were concerned. “You can't go out there,” the lion said in his deep, wise voice.

“I'll be careful. No one will see me.”

That night Fatuma still sat in the same spot. Her eyes were closed. The sunbird flew in through the window and landed on her knee. “Fatuma.”

She opened her eyes. She was happy to see her friend again. “How can you be outside of the forest?”

“I broke the rule because you're my best friend. I had to come and make sure you're all right.”

“My dearest friend, it's not safe here. Please fly away and never leave the forest again.”

“You don't look well. Are you sick?”

“Please leave now.”

“Will you come and visit us soon?”

Fatuma heard footsteps. She didn't want her dad to see the sunbird. “There is no time. You must leave now.”

“Will you come back to the forest?”

She looked at the door with frightened eyes. “Yes, I will.”

The sunbird felt happy and flew out the same way he got in. James came in and looked around him. “I thought I heard you talking.”

“I was praying.”

“For your mom.”

“For my friends to be safe.”

Fatuma stood up. “I'm going to get some water.” She left the shack. James saw something shining on the floor. He picked up a gold feather, looked at it, and touched it. He was surprised to see such a thing in his tiny shack. He didn't know where it had come from or how it had gotten inside the house.

As Fatuma pumped water, she looked at the stars. “Mom, protect them, please.”

It was another sleepless night for Fatuma. She was thinking about her dad and the animals. James was restless too. He couldn't sleep and couldn't stop thinking of the gold feather. The first thing James did in the morning was going to the library. He read a book about ancient myths. The book included a chapter about sunbirds.

“The sunbirds are creatures of light. They come from the sun, and they need the sun to survive. The sunbirds were holy in many regions. They were represented as swallows on the temples' walls. Their wings are stronger than eagles' wings. They have gentle souls. Their entire bodies are made of pure gold.”

James stopped reading. He had found the information he was looking for. A bird made out of pure gold. James thought that it was a golden opportunity for him. It was a once-in-a-lifetime deal for him to stop poaching. Just one more hunt could change his life and Fatuma's too forever, to live in a big house, to have nice things.

Fatuma walked to the forest. She looked back every few meters to ensure no one was following her. She entered the magical forest. Every living being in the forest was happy to see her again.

She was weak and tired. She sat under a tree to rest and have peace. “Come and drink with me,” The deer called to her.

Fatuma drank some milk from the lake. The gorillas brought her mangoes, dates, watermelons, and apricots to eat. She ate with her loyal friends, and she felt better after eating. Fatuma climbed the

highest tree, sat on the branch, and watched the sunbird flying high. Then he landed on his nest next to her.

“I wish I could fly high and away.” She said sadly.

“Everyone can fly.”

“I don't have wings.”

“You don't need them. Birds need wings to fly. Humans have spirits. Happiness will give you wings.”

Fatuma smiled to hide her sadness. “I've come today to say goodbye.”

The sunbird didn't understand. “What do you mean?”

“This is the last time I can come here. I wanted to see the animals and the forest for the last time.”

“I thought you loved coming here.”

“There are things that I can't explain. I love you, my friend.”

Fatuma climbed down the tree crying, and as she left the forest, she promised herself to do anything to keep the forest safe, even if it meant that she would never see her friends again.

Fatuma went home, and James was there waiting for her. “Where were you?”

“I went for a walk in the jungle.”

“I see.”

Fatuma got closer to him. “Let's move far away. You can get a decent job, and I'll work too. We can forget all that you did and start a new life.”

“There is one more job to do here, then we'll be rich, and I promise we'll move to a better house.”

“It will be too late to forgive you, Dad.”

After the darkness overtook the sky, Fatuma sat outside the window, looking at the tree. Her

heart sank into a deep ocean of sadness. James came in. He put some darts and a tranquilizer gun in his coat. "I'm leaving to meet my boss." He left the shack and left his coat behind on the floor. James started the car and drove just a few meters from the shack. He walked back and hid in the bushes. He waited for Fatuma to take the bait.

Back in the shack, Fatuma looked at the coat. She grabbed it, took the darts out of the pocket, and broke them. Then she saw it, the gold feather. She heard her dad's voice echo in her ears. "There is one more job to do here, then we'll be rich, and I promise we'll move to a better house." She knew what kind of job it was.

Fatuma ran barefoot out of the shack. She ran as fast as she could. James smiled and followed her. She cried the whole way. The only thing on her mind was getting to the forest before her dad did.

Fatuma reached the gate. She looked at the door, which wasn't invisible anymore. "No, no, no." She ran through it. The sun was setting. The forest seemed sad, and the flowers weren't blooming.

"Sunbird, where are you?" She called her friend loudly.

The lion came out. "The sunbird's heart is heavy. That's the reason why the sun is setting."

"What about the gate? Why's it open?"

"His heart and mind aren't at peace. He can't control the gate," the elephant answered her.

James saw the gate. He thought his eyes were playing tricks on him. He had been to this spot in the jungle many times and had never seen the gate. He snuck in and hid again.

"Sunbird, please come down. I need to talk to you."

The sunbird flew down. His enormous, beautiful wings flapped in the air. James' eyes got widened, and greed filled his heart.

"You said you would never come back," he said sadly

"I had to come to warn you. There's great danger on its way here."

"How did anyone know about us?" The monkey asked.

“It's not time for questions. Please hide and fix the gate.”

The sunbird was grateful for her warning. “Thank you.”

As Fatuma turned around to leave, she saw her dad pointing a gun at her friend. Her eyes and heart filled with fear. She leaped in the bullet's way and took it in her chest. All of the animals screamed. Some of them ran in every direction, trying to hide. James dropped his gun and fell to his knees. “What have I done?” he said with tears.

Fatuma's little body hit the ground. She opened her palm. The sunbird stood on it. “This bullet was for me.” His tears dropped on her hand.

“I would have done anything to protect you. You're my best friend.” Her tears were all over her face. “I can see my mom,” she said with a weak voice and a smile.

The sunset, and the bright forest became dark, gloomy, and scary, and the leaves fell from the trees. Fatuma closed her eyes. James' heart was broken. The sunbird wiped her tears with his wing.

“You're my best friend.”

The sun began to rise, and the flowers bloomed. A miracle happened. Fatuma turned into a sunbird. Her gold heart turned her into a gold bird. She had strong wings. She spread them to fly. “Dad, I love you.”

Fatuma flew high with her friend. The forest was happy and bright again.

Knowing his beloved daughter lived, James left the magical forest with a happy heart. Since that day, James has never held a gun to hurt an animal. Now he holds a gun to protect the animals, as he became a brave ranger.

The End