

A Short Story Series

YESHUA



BOOK ONE
MARY OF
BETHANY

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A Note to the Reader.

There are many stories told about Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

They have been preached, debated, memorized, and passed down across generations. His words have shaped nations. His life has divided history. Yet, often, the people who encountered him most intimately are remembered only in fragments, mentioned briefly, then folded back into the crowd.

This series is an attempt to listen more closely.

YESHUA is a collection of stories told from the perspective of those who met Him, not as doctrine, not as distant legend, but as lived experience. It centres the voices of women whose lives were interrupted, reoriented, and forever changed by a single encounter with Him.

These stories imagine what it may have felt like to sit at His feet.

To wait for Him in grief.

To be seen in a world that often refused to look.

Each book steps into the inner world of a woman who crossed paths with Jesus—her fears, her faith, her questions, her devotion. The events remain rooted in the Biblical account, but the emotions, silences, and private reckonings are explored with creative reverence.

This is not a retelling meant to replace Scripture. It is an invitation to dwell within it.

To slow down.

To notice.

To remember that before theology, there were encounters.

Before crowds, there were conversations.

Before the cross, there was love.

Each book in the **YESHUA** series stands alone, yet together they form a tapestry of witnesses; many lives, many voices, one presence.

This is where we begin.

I know of a man named Yeshua.

Long before his name became a murmur on every lip, before it stirred arguments at the well or split rooms into believers and doubters, he was simply my brother's closest friend. And, without my knowing it then, the quiet axis upon which my own life would turn.

My brother, Lazarus, had come to this village many years before Martha and I followed. Opportunity had led him here; a good-paying job, he said, spoken with the cautious pride of a man determined to build something lasting. When Martha and I came of age, he sent for us. His letter smelled faintly of cedar and dust, and I remember reading it over and over, tracing his handwriting as though it could steady my trembling heart.

Leaving home was not easy. Our Aramaic was clumsy, our accents betraying us with every sentence. At the market, traders smiled too slowly; at the well, women paused before replying, their curiosity barely disguised. But Lazarus was patient. He corrected us gently, laughed when we stumbled, and insisted we speak, even when it felt easier to stay silent. "You will sound like the locals soon enough," he promised. And he was right.

It was during those early weeks, when everything still felt strange and unsettled, that I first saw Yeshua.

Martha had sent me to the market that afternoon. The sun pressed heavily against my back, and the leather bag in my hand cut into my palm. On my way, I passed Joseph's workshop, a familiar place even then, for it sat near the road that curved toward the fig trees.

That was where he was.

Yeshua stood inside the workshop, shaping a wooden stool. His sleeves were rolled up, his hands steady as he guided the saw through the grain. Sweat clung to his brow, catching the light, and he hummed softly—an old tune, one my mother used to sing when the lamps were lit, and the day's work was done.

I had heard of him already, of course. People spoke of him often. They said he was a teacher of the law, wise beyond his years, respected even by men twice his age. At the well, the girls' spoke of him in hushed, excited voices, their laughter rising

and falling like birds startled into flight. Yet what struck me most was not his reputation, but the simple fact that, despite it all, he still laboured beside his father.

I stopped beneath the fig tree without meaning to.

I do not know how long I stood there watching him work. Time seemed to loosen its grip, stretching and thinning until it scarcely existed at all. He moved with an ease that felt unforced, as though effort itself bowed before him. I remember thinking that I could stand there all day and never grow weary.

Then he looked up.

Our eyes met, and my heart stumbled as though it had forgotten its own rhythm. Heat rushed to my face. I wanted to disappear, to melt into the bark of the fig tree behind me. But Yeshua did not frown or look away. He smiled.

It was not the polite smile people offer strangers. It was warm, unguarded, welcoming — like one shared between old friends who have been reunited after a long absence. For a moment, I wondered if we had met before, somewhere beyond memory, in a place I could not quite name.

He set the wood aside and walked toward me. Each step felt impossibly loud in my ears.

He took my hand playfully.

"My name is Yeshua," he said.

The world seemed to pause, holding its breath. He asked for my name in return, but my tongue betrayed me. I opened my mouth, yet no sound came. Panic fluttered in my chest.

He only laughed softly. "It's all right," he said, as though silence itself were an answer.

His eyes dropped to the leather bag in my hand. "You should go," he added gently. "You've been standing here a long time."

Had he noticed me before I noticed him?

I wanted to ask. I wanted to ask a thousand things. But words failed me again. I pulled my hand from his grasp, nodded quickly, and ran all the way home, my heart pounding louder than my footsteps.

Martha scolded me for lingering. She always did. The house needed tending, she said, and daydreams could not sweep floors or knead dough. I apologized and set to work, though my thoughts drifted back to the workshop and the fig tree again and again.

Days folded into weeks. Weeks into months.

Yeshua's name grew heavier on the lips of everyone. It travelled faster than traders and farther than gossip. At the well, the girls swore he was too good to be merely a man—perhaps a fallen angel, they whispered, eyes shining. In the evenings, Lazarus spoke of him with unmistakable pride, recounting how Yeshua's words had shaped his faith, his courage, his understanding of God.

They never missed his teachings at the synagogue.

I longed to go.

But I was a girl, and the crowds were large, and my place, according to everyone but my own heart, was elsewhere. So, I listened from a distance, gathering fragments of his words as they drifted back through others' retellings.

Whenever Martha sent me on errands, I passed Joseph's workshop, hoping to catch a glimpse of him again. But he was rarely there now. Only his brothers moved in and out, their laughter echoing where his quiet humming once had.

Still, even in his absence, something had shifted within me.

The day Lazarus announced that Yeshua would be coming to our house, my heart leapt so suddenly I thought Martha might hear it.

"He will come for the afternoon meal," my brother said, trying, and failing, to sound casual. "Around the ninth hour."

I nodded, though my hands had already begun to tremble. Yeshua. In our house. Sitting at our table. Breathing the same air. I retreated to my corner and pretended to mend a tear in my garment, though the needle slipped more than once between my fingers.

By the next morning, the news had spread.

By midday, our house was no longer ours.

People began arriving long before the sun reached its highest point. Some brought bread or oil; others brought nothing but questions and expectation. Neighbours hovered near the doorway. Children darted between legs. Voices layered upon voices until the walls themselves seemed to hum.

Martha took command at once.

She tied her scarf tightly, rolled up her sleeves, and set the house in motion like a well-rehearsed orchestra. Pots were scrubbed. Grain was measured. Vegetables were chopped with sharp, decisive strokes. I helped where I could; fetching water, kneading dough, stirring until my arms ached, but my mind was already elsewhere.

At the third hour before his arrival, Martha turned her sharp eyes on me. "Mary," she said, "go and rinse your hands properly. And when you return, help me with the bread."

"Yes, sister," I answered.

Instead, when the sun dipped just slightly westward, I slipped away.

I bathed quickly, scrubbing away the dust of the day. I combed my hair until it lay smooth and obedient. From the chest beneath my sleeping mat, I brought out my finest gown, the one reserved for feast days. I tied my scarf carefully, using the same knot Mama once taught me, and the one she said would remind me who I was whenever the world felt too large.

This was not vanity, I told myself.

This was reverence.

When I returned to the courtyard, the air had shifted. Expectation crackled like dry leaves beneath a footstep.

Then he arrived.

Not late. Not early.

Exactly on time.

Yeshua entered our home as though he had always belonged there. That same warmth rested on his face, unchanged by the crowd or the weight of so many watching eyes. Behind him came twelve men I recognized by reputation alone, followed by others; men, women, children, drawn as if by an unseen current.

He greeted everyone.

Not hurriedly. Not absentmindedly.

He bent to the children, offering them high-fives, speaking to them as though their words mattered just as much as any elder's. When Lazarus stepped forward, their embrace was unrestrained, the kind shared by men whose lives had been quietly braided together by loyalty and faith.

When it was time to greet him, I stood beside Martha and my brother, my pulse loud in my ears.

"Yeshua," Lazarus said, his voice thick with pride, "these are my sisters, Martha and Mary."

Yeshua's eyes found mine.

"So, the name is Mary," he said, smiling. "That's wonderful. My mother's name is Mary too."

All I could do was smile back, my words once again hiding somewhere beyond reach.

The house filled quickly. Every place was taken. People pressed against walls, doorways, even windows, straining to hear him speak. I scanned the room, hoping—foolishly, for an empty space near him.

"Mary," Lazarus called, "we need more cups for the drink."

I murmured something that might have been obedience and darted away, moving faster than my thoughts. When I returned, breathless but triumphant, the moment I had been waiting for was already unfolding.

Yeshua had begun to teach.

His voice did not rise above the noise; the noise sank beneath his voice. Words flowed from him like water over smooth stones; clear, patient, alive. People leaned in. Some nodded. Others wept quietly, as though something long buried had been named at last.

I stood by the doorway, afraid to move, afraid to miss even a single syllable.

Then he looked directly at me.

"Mary," he said.

My breath caught.

"Come and sit here with me."

The room stilled. Every face turned toward me. Heat rushed to my cheeks as I crossed the floor, my steps small and unsure. I lowered myself at his feet, the place of a learner, of one hungry for truth.

The nearness of him was overwhelming. Not because he was imposing, but because he was utterly present. I felt seen, not as a servant, no, not as a sister rushing between tasks, but as myself.

Behind us, Martha moved frantically, her concern for the guests written in every hurried step. At last, she stopped beside Yeshua.

"Master," she said, struggling to keep the strain from her voice, "do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to come help me."

I shrank inward, guilt and longing colliding in my chest.

Yeshua turned toward her, his voice gentle but firm. "Martha, Martha," he said, "you are worried and troubled about many things. But your sister has chosen what is good, and it will not be taken away from her."

His hand rested briefly on my shoulder.

Martha said nothing more. She turned and returned to her work, the clatter of dishes masking whatever thoughts stirred within her.

That day, something settled inside me.

I knew, without needing to speak it aloud, that I would follow him as far as my feet could carry me. Wherever he taught, I would listen. Whenever he passed through the synagogue, I would find a way to be there, at the front, if possible, close enough to see his face.

And I was.

I was there when he fed thousands with bread and fishes small enough to fit into a child's hands. I was there when the sick walked away whole, when the broken lifted their heads with new hope, when the blind received their sight. Some days he travelled too far for me to follow, and I waited, gathering scraps of stories like precious grain.

Whispers followed him now.

Some called him prophet.

Others called him blasphemer.

At the market, a woman scoffed, "A carpenter's son healing the sick?" At the well, Salome leaned close and hissed, "They say he is a child of sin."

I remembered his words instead.

Judge not, lest you be judged.

Then Lazarus fell ill.

And the world I knew began to crack.

Lazarus had always been strong.

Not the kind that demanded attention, but steady, like a pillar you leaned against without thinking, certain it would not give way. When he laughed, it filled the room. When he spoke, people listened. To imagine him weakened felt impossible at first, like trying to picture the sea without water.

The illness began quietly.

A cough that lingered too long. A weariness that sleep did not cure. He waved off our concern with a smile, insisting it was nothing more than exhaustion from work. But Martha notices everything. She watched his steps slow, his appetite fade, the light in his eyes dim ever so slightly.

Soon, the physicians were called.

They came with leather bags heavy with remedies and words that sounded hopeful until you listened closely. They pressed his wrists, examined his tongue, murmured to one another in low voices. They left behind instructions, herbs, and uncertainty.

Each day, Lazarus grew weaker.

Martha moved through the house like a woman at war; boiling water, changing linens, arguing gently with fate itself, as if she was mad at it but not. I sat by his side, wiping his brow, whispering prayers Yeshua had taught us, clinging to each syllable as though it were a rope.

"Send for him," Martha said one night, her voice breaking through her composure at last.

I did not hesitate.

We sent word to Yeshua immediately: *Lord, the one you love is ill.* The message felt sufficient. He loved Lazarus. We knew that. Surely, he would come.

I waited.

Every footstep outside made my heart jump. Every distant voice stirred hope. I imagined him arriving breathless, placing his hands on my brother, speaking life with the same calm authority I had seen restore so many others.

But the hours passed.

Then days.

And he did not come.

I prayed harder.

I prayed louder.

I prayed in silence when my voice failed me.

Still, the sickness tightened its grip.

On the evening Lazarus was brought home for the last time, the sky burned red, as though it too mourned what was about to be lost. His breathing was shallow now, his skin pale beneath the lamplight. I held his hand and begged God for mercy, my tears soaking the blanket.

When he died, the world did not shatter the way I expected.

It went still.

So still it frightened me.

The house filled quickly with mourners; friends, neighbours, those who came to comfort and those who came simply because death draws a crowd. Voices blended into a dull hum, like water rushing far away. I heard some whisper, *"why didn't Yeshua come to heal him"*. *"I thought he was one his closest friend"*. I could not cry at first. My grief sat heavy and unmoving, pressing against my chest.

My brother was gone.

Our protector.

Our anchor.

I thought of Yeshua.

If you had been here, my heart accused, even as another part of me recoiled from the thought. I did not understand the delay. I did not understand the silence.

Four days passed.

Grief aged quickly in that time, settling into our bones. Then Martha came to me, her eyes wide, and her breath uneven.

"He is here," she whispered. "And he is asking for you."

Something inside me broke open.

I ran.

I did not stop to explain. I did not look back. My feet struck the earth hard and fast as I raced toward the village where he waited. People followed, those who had come to mourn with us, startled by my sudden urgency. I barely noticed them.

When I saw him, the tears finally came.

I fell at his feet, the words tearing themselves from my chest. "Lord," I cried, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

My body shook with sobs. Around us, others wept too, drawn into the rawness of the moment.

Yeshua lifted me up.

He held me as though my grief were not too heavy for him. He asked where Lazarus had been laid, and when they told him, he said simply, "Take me to him."

As we walked, I watched his face.

He was not distant.

He was not unmoved.

Tears slipped down his cheeks.

My Lord wept.

In that moment, my faith did not vanish... it trembled. I did not yet know what he would do. I only knew this: even in death, even in silence, I trusted him.

The tomb lay just beyond the village, carved into the rock like a wound the earth refused to close.

As we approached, the air thickened. Mourners gathered in uneasy clusters, whispering behind their hands. Some followed out of obligation, others out of curiosity. Death had drawn them here but so had Yeshua.

I walked beside him, my steps heavy, my heart torn between hope and fear. I had accused him with my tears, yet I followed him still. I did not know what I expected. I only knew that standing near him felt like the safest place to be, even when nothing made sense.

When we reached the tomb, he stopped.

"Where have you laid him?" he asked, though he already knew.

They pointed.

The stone sat firmly in place, sealed with finality. Four days. Long enough for certainty to settle in. Long enough for even faith to begin whispering its doubts.

Yeshua looked at the stone.

"Take it away," he said.

Martha stiffened beside me. "Lord," she said carefully, "by this time there is a stench. He has been dead four days."

Her words were practical, sensible, anchored in the reality we all shared. I could not fault her for them. Part of me clung to that same logic, even as another part of me remembered every word he had ever spoken.

Yeshua turned to her. "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

Silence fell.

Men stepped forward and strained against the stone. It groaned as it rolled away, releasing the heavy breath of death. I pressed my scarf to my mouth, my knees weakening.

Yeshua lifted his eyes.

"Father," he said, his voice steady, "I thank you that you have heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I say this for the sake of those standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

Then he cried out.

"Lazarus, come forth!"

The words struck the air like thunder.

For a heartbeat, nothing happened.

Then, movement.

A figure emerged from the darkness, wrapped in burial cloths, his steps slow and unsteady. Gasps erupted around us. Some screamed. Others fell back in terror.

My breath caught painfully in my chest.

Lazarus.

Alive.

Yeshua spoke again. "Unbind him and let him go."

Hands reached out, trembling, disbelieving, pulling away the cloths. Colour returned to my brother's face. His eyes focused, searching, then finding us.

"Martha," he whispered.

I sobbed.

I ran to him, clinging to his living, breathing body, laughter and tears colliding in my throat. Death had let go. The grave had obeyed.

Around us, the crowd fractured, some praising God openly, others retreating in fear, already forming the questions that would harden into opposition.

I looked at Yeshua.

He stood apart, calm amid the chaos, as though he had simply called dawn after night. Our eyes met, and in that moment, I understood something I had not before.

This miracle was not only for Lazarus.

It was for all of us.

For belief.

For what would come next.

That evening, as our house filled once more, this time with astonishment instead of mourning, I watched Yeshua quietly. Joy surrounded him, but a shadow lingered too, stretching long and dark across the floor.

I did not yet know its shape.

Only that life had been restored.

And that death, angered by its defeat, would not remain silent for long.

Life returned to our house, but it did not return quietly.

Lazarus walked, spoke, and laughed, alive in a way that startled even himself. People came from every direction to see him, to touch his hands, to search his face for signs of the grave. Our home became a place of testimony, of wonder, of questions asked too softly to be innocent.

And always, close behind the wonder, came the danger.

I felt it in the way some eyes lingered too long on Yeshua. In the way conversations fell silent when he passed. In the way joy and fear shared the same breath.

Six days before the Passover, Yeshua came to Bethany again.

This time, there was no mourning to prepare for, only a supper in his honor. Martha did what she always did: she served. Her hands moved with purpose, her heart expressed in labour. Lazarus reclined at the table, living proof that death had been challenged and undone.

I watched them both, my siblings, whole again.

Yet my attention kept returning to Yeshua.

He sat among us, but there was a weight about him now, a quiet gravity that bent the air. I remembered the shadow I had seen after Lazarus was raised, the one

stretching longer as the days went by. I slipped away into my room. What can I do for him?

How can I worship him that will express the weight in my heart? My thoughts raged, making my heart even heavier. But the shadow wouldn't go away.

In my room, tucked away in a clay jar, was an ointment.

Pure nard.

Its fragrance had filled the space the first time Mama let me unseal it years ago. Costly. Rare. Worth more than a year's wages. She had given it to me the night before we left for Bethany, with careful hands and softer eyes.

"Keep this," she had said. "Follow your heart and you will know the right time." I did not know then what that would be.

But now, sitting at his feet once more, I understood.

What could I give him?

Not words, he had given me better ones.

Not service, I had seen how love wasn't just an action, but a person.

What I carried was gratitude too deep for speech, devotion too full for restraint. He had given me back my brother. He had given me faith that could survive a storm. He had shown me a love that did not hurry pain away but walked straight through it. I rose.

The living room stilled. I walked up to where Yeshua sat with his followers.

I broke the jar.

The sound was sharp, final. There would be no saving this for later. I poured the ointment over his feet, and the fragrance rushed out like a living thing, filling every corner of the house. I knelt and wiped his feet with my hair, unashamed, unguarded.

Gasps followed.

Then voices, but I stayed down, at his feet.

"Why this waste?" Judas said sharply. "This could have been sold and the money given to the poor."

The words struck the room like a slap. Heat rose in my chest, but before I could speak, Yeshua did.

"Leave her alone," he said.

His voice was firm now, unyielding. "She has done a beautiful thing for me. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

He looked at me, not with surprise, not with embarrassment, but with understanding that felt eternal.

"She has kept this for the day of my burial."

The room shifted.

Burial.

The word lodged itself in my heart like a seed I did not want to water. Yet even then, I did not pull away. If this was what love required, I would not withhold it.

That night, after the guests had gone and the lamps burned low, I sat alone, breathing in the last traces of nard clinging to my skin.

I thought of the fig tree.

Of the workshop.

Of his tears at the tomb.

Of a voice strong enough to call the dead back to life, and gentle enough to call my name.

I did not know how the days ahead would unfold.

But I knew this:

I had chosen.

And whatever the cost, I would never regret sitting at his feet.

About the Book.

(MARY OF BETHANY — Book One of the YESHUA Series)

Mary of Bethany is a contemplative retelling of one woman's encounter with Jesus, told from her own voice, in her own time.

Through Mary's eyes, we witness a Jesus who teaches not only with words, but with presence. A Jesus who welcomes stillness in a world obsessed with productivity. A Jesus who weeps, waits, and calls the dead back to life.

The story traces Mary's journey from quiet observer to a devoted follower: from a fleeting moment beneath a fig tree, to the choice to sit at His feet, to the agony of unanswered prayer, and finally, to an act of devotion that speaks louder than words.

At its heart, *Mary of Bethany* is a story about love that listens, faith that survives, and worship that costs something. It explores grief, expectation, disappointment, and belief, not as abstract ideas, but as lived realities.

This book is the first in the **YESHUA** series, a collection dedicated to reimagining Biblical encounters through the inner lives of women who met Jesus and were never the same again.

