

Dedication

*For Dean,
my love, my light, my forever.*

You were my calm in every storm, my voice of reason and the quiet strength behind every dream I dared to dream.

Though you are no longer by my side, you are everywhere. I hear your voice in our children and see your smile reflected in theirs.

This book is a tribute to the life we lived, the love we shared and the strength I discovered in the wake of losing you.

Thank you for always believing in me, for loving me unconditionally and for still showing up in ways only I can feel.

You will always be my beginning, my middle and the soul that walks beside me into every next chapter.

Letter to My Readers

Dear Reader,

If you are holding this book, chances are you've felt the heavy weight of loss. You've known the silence that follows a goodbye you never thought you'd have to say. If your goodbye came during the global storm of the Covid-19 pandemic, then I know – deeply and painfully – how cruel and abrupt that loss could have been.

I wrote Among Cherry Blossoms and Unicorns not only to honour my husband Dean, but also to find my way through the darkness. It became my compass when the world no longer made sense. It became my voice when grief silenced me.

To those who have lost loved ones during Covid: your grief matters, your pain is valid. Whether your loss was met with distance instead of embraces, silence instead of ceremony, or isolation instead of community – I see you. I honour the depth of what you carry.

This book is not a manual for grief, because there is no such thing. But it is a companion, a hand to hold and a whisper that says you are not alone. That even though healing is messy, strange and hard, it is possible.

And you, dear reader, are not broken but rather, you are becoming. Every petal that falls is proof that something once bloomed and perhaps, in time, it will bloom again.

With all my love,

Nerina