

How 23-year-old found place on screen

Gibril Igale. She almost did not audition but managed to find her place on screens.

BY TREVOR LUTALO

When viewers of the TV show, *Loving Beyond*, meet Nakki, they see confidence, composure and a character who seems fully at home in her world. But for 23-year-old Gibril Hadijah Igale, the woman behind the role, belonging is something she had to learn, often in moments when she felt it slipping away most.

Today, recognition follows her in small, unexpected ways. Children approach her convinced she is Nakki in real life, asking questions that blur the line between fiction and reality. One child once asked where her car was, assuming the on-screen life extended beyond the set. Igale laughs at the memory, admitting she played along. "I told them I had left it somewhere," she says. "The show must continue."

But long before the recognition, before the cameras and the growing public attention, there was a Gibril, more uncertain version of Igale, one who almost convinced herself she did not belong in the very spaces that would later define her.

A shy beginning

To understand Igale's journey, one has to return to 2018, when she was a student at YMCA pursuing computer science. At the time, her world was far removed from film sets and scripts. She describes herself as shy, hesitant to step forward even when opportunities presented themselves.

There was a fashion show at campus, and she wanted to participate. But hesitation held her back. "I wanted to join, but I was shy," she recalls.

Instead, she gravitated toward basketball, something she enjoyed, but not something she was deeply connected to. When a coach scouted her and offered free training, she took the opportunity and even hoped to join the national team structure. For a moment, it felt like a path



Gibril Igale, 23, says film industry requires good mental wellness.

FUTURE

Igale is focused on growth. Her current role reflects a certain type of character, kindness, understanding, and groundedness. But she is already thinking about what comes next. "I would love to take on roles that challenge me physically. So I don't get too comfortable," she says. She is also open to formal training, recognising that there is still much to learn. "Learning never ends. I would like to join film school or theatre to pick up more skills," she says. Her long-term vision extends beyond acting. She sees herself succeeding not just as a performer, but also as a writer, someone contributing to the industry in multiple ways.

opening up. But something did not sit right. "With time, I started realising that wasn't my calling," she says. "Perhaps I only wanted to do it because my grandpa loved it."

Learning from zero

Around the same time, a friend suggested she would make a good model. That comment planted a seed. The challenge was that Igale had no idea what modelling involved.

"I didn't know what modelling was besides the girls I saw in magazines," she says. "I didn't know how to walk or how to conduct myself at a casting."

Still, she showed up. In December 2019, she was given a chance to walk in a fashion show. It was unpolished, and it was difficult, but it was a start. For Igale, that moment was less about performance and more about courage, stepping into a space where she felt completely unprepared.

Then 2020 happened. Like many young people, Igale's plans were disrupted by the Covid-19 lockdown. Schools closed, uncertainty set in.

"I was worried about my studies. I had just paid tuition for the whole year and then boom,

schools are closed," she says.

Yet in that uncertainty, another door opened. An initiative supported by the European Union, Opportunities Are Here, came to Uganda in search of designers, models and artists. Igale took part, this time with slightly more confidence than before.

She won the modelling category. The win led to her being signed by Joram Model Management, and soon after, she began working internationally. By 2021, at just 19, she had stepped onto a global stage, an outcome that would have seemed unlikely just a few years earlier.

But even then, her path was not linear. When she returned home during the holidays, she worked as a marketer at an automobile customisation company, Kleandrive. Her work life remained fluid, sometimes busy, sometimes quiet, always shifting.

"I didn't really experience a 9 to 5 job. Everything I have been doing has had project-based schedules," she says.

The moment of doubt

Despite her growing exposure, the transition into acting brought a new kind of challenge, one that was less about opportunity and more about belief.

It happened during auditions. Walking into the room, Igale found herself surrounded by other young women who spoke with confidence and carried themselves like trained actors. In that moment, comparison took over.

"The only time I doubted myself was when I went for the physical auditions. Just hearing the way the other girls spoke and the fact that some of them were actors," she admits.

The internal dialogue was immediate and harsh. "I immediately started thinking I had no business being there."

It is a quiet moment, but a defining one. There were no cameras, no applause, just a decision forming in her mind about whether she belonged.

Becoming Nakki

When Igale eventually landed a role in *Loving Beyond*, the reality of what she had stepped into began to unfold gradually. At first, the character did not feel far removed from who she was. But as the story developed, the demands grew.

"I realised that Igale stops here and Nakki carries on further," she says.

It required a shift in identity. Without formal film school training, Igale had to learn on the job. She adjusted to larger crews, understood camera angles, and learnt how to receive and respond to lines from fellow actors/actresses.

"I hadn't been to film school, but I watched other actors and learnt from them."

The turning point came when *Loving Beyond* began to air. That is when recognition started to build, not just from friends and family, but strangers who now saw her through the lens of her character.

"I realised it was going to change my life when it started airing. People were going to recognise me, get happy for me, judge me and everything else," she says.

Staying grounded

Fame, even at a growing level, can be disorienting. But Igale approaches it with a sense of calm that reflects her personal values. "I feel like this is all normal. No amount of fame could push me to pride," she says.

Her grounding comes from faith and a deliberate commitment to humility. "Humility costs nothing but buys everything," she adds.

She says protecting her mental health is a non-negotiable. "I would pause everything for my own peace."

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