

Chapter Two: Drift and Starlight

The days blurred, one into another, like brushstrokes over water. Time had no edges here, only motion. Sunrises came softly, with no land to interrupt them, and the ocean spoke in rhythms older than memory. I began to forget what day it was. That felt like a kind of freedom.

There were children racing the decks, couples squinting at the horizon, mothers holding tightly to little hands that kept trying to let go. I watched them all from the railings or the shade of the upper deck, listening to the creak of the ship and the deep-throated churn of the engine. I rarely spoke. I didn't need to. Something in me was uncoiling, wordless, weightless.

One night, beneath a sky pressed thick with stars, I whispered a name I didn't recognize. Angelique. Just that. The word shimmered in the air and disappeared. But I felt it settle in the hollow behind my ribs, as though it had been waiting for permission.

It came not like thunder, but like remembering.

My little baby boy let go of my finger just long enough to wobble three steps toward the rail, then collapsed into my arms, giggling. The waves beyond him rolled and lifted like applause. Somewhere behind us, the engines hummed their lullaby. My son had learned to walk, not on land, but on water.

My husband smiled from his deckchair; eyes crinkled with that quiet knowing he always wore. Neither of us said it aloud, but we felt it, something sacred had happened. We hadn't just brought our child into the world. Now we were helping him walk into it.

Each evening we'd walk the length of the ship together, a ritual we invented amid routine. My boy's little feet tapped the deck like a drumbeat of becoming. I began to wonder if he was showing me the way—not just toward Melbourne, but toward her. Toward Angelique.

The boy had finally fallen asleep. His curls damp with sea air, one hand still curled near his cheek, as if reaching for a dream. My husband Ben and I sat side by side beneath a sky so vast it made our silence feel like prayer.

Ben shifted in his chair; his gaze fixed on the stars as if they might answer for him.

"We're really doing it," he said, not looking at me but at the dark line where the ocean kissed the stars.

I nodded. "I don't know what's waiting for us," I whispered. "But I know I couldn't turn

back.”

He reached for my hand, calloused and warm. “Neither could I.”

There was nothing dramatic in it. No sudden swell of music. Just the quiet weight of commitment. The gentle awe of movement.

The moon slid between clouds like a curtain parting. In that moment, I felt it again, that whisper without words, that presence without shape. It hovered like mist just behind my name.

“She didn’t arrive with wings or a voice. Just a presence. A knowing. Like I’d met her before, or maybe she had always been part of me.”

Angelique. Still not mine. Not yet. But drawing nearer, like land on the horizon. The ache hadn’t left. It had simply learned to breathe with the sea.

Chapter Three: Starlight and Whisper

The ship glided into Las Palmas beneath a sun-streaked sky, the harbor humming with colour and voices. Locals lined the cobbled walkways, their tables cluttered with glinting trinkets, handwoven linens soft as sea foam, and hats dyed in the most joyous colours. The air was thick with the scent of grilled fish and sweet citrus, yet for some reason, the island remained a blur in my mind. Just flickers—a burst of red cloth fluttering in the breeze, a woman’s laughter ringing like a chime, the weight of coins in my palm. Maybe I was already dreaming of what lay ahead.

Cape Town was where the world cracked open.

The cable car creaked and climbed as if it too felt the weight of the moment. From the top of Table Mountain, the view stole my breath—blue stretched in every direction, the bay curving like an embrace around the city. Far below, the Ellinis rested like a sliver of moonlight on the sea. It was beautiful. Painfully beautiful. My heart beat differently in Africa.

I had not yet learned what the land would teach me: how its soil carries grief and resilience in equal measure. On that first visit, I only saw glimpses—shadows in doorways, sidelong glances on buses. The separation between black and white wasn’t just visible—it was palpable.

I remember riding in a bus where the signs whispered of division. “Whites Only.” A phrase both silent and screaming. Even in taxis driven by kind black men, the message stood firm—who belonged where. Something inside me shifted. Not fully awakened but stirred. And quietly, gently, I felt the presence of God moving in the margins of my understanding.

Australia was our destination—Fremantle first, where the scent of gum trees kissed the wind, then Melbourne, sprawling and unfamiliar. We were to begin anew. It was 1968. I was 24.

For ten pounds, we became migrants, but the journey felt anything but frugal.

The *Ellinis* was a palace on water: polished brass railings, dinner menus that read like poetry, and music that danced through grand ballrooms each evening. I walked the deck beneath stars I didn't yet know by name.

And I remember the meals.

Pumpkin and spinach—how strange they tasted at first, foreign on my tongue. I frowned through the first few bites, but I ate them anyway. Someone had said they were loved in Australia. And I was determined to love this country before it had even learned my name.