

Angelique

A JOURNEY OF BECOMING

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Introduction

A Journey of Becoming

Angelique is more than a story, it is a vessel of healing, hope, and divine encounter. Through the trembling pages of this narrative, you'll meet a young woman whose life unfolds like a prayer answered slowly, then all at once. Angelique's journey, woven with grace, is shaped by brokenness and a relentless pursuit of belonging, both in the world and in God's heart.

In a sacred place, I wrote this book, drawing from moments of clarity and struggle that shaped my walk with Christ. Angelique carries pieces of my testimony, and yet she is entirely her own. Her voice may tremble, but it will resonate deep in the soul of anyone who has ever questioned their worth, battled loneliness, or yearned for freedom.

Let these chapters speak truth to the quiet places of your heart. May you find yourself seen, loved, and lifted, just as Angelique does, not by chance, but by divine design.

Welcome to her story. Welcome to yours.

About the Author

Sylvia is a storyteller whose words are born of faith, wonder, and an unwavering call to inspire. Rooted in the grace of her testimony, she writes with tenderness and truth, weaving spiritual threads through every narrative stitch.

Her journey, from quiet surrender to bold purpose, infuses *Angelique* with depth and authenticity, inviting readers to discover that transformation is not just possible, but promised.

More than an author, Sylvia sees herself as a soul-winner, using creativity as ministry. Through her books and personal reflections, she seeks to guide hearts toward healing, belonging, and the intimate presence of God.

She lives in joyful pursuit of heaven on earth and hopes this book brings you a little closer.

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Angelique

Chapter One:

The Crossing

I left England wrapped in fog, the kind that clings to your coat and memory alike. At twenty-three years of age, I didn't know I'd stepped into the middle of my own story. I only knew the ache in my chest wasn't fear. It was calling.

This moment could reveal the tension between old identity and future purpose. Sylvia, boarding the ship, clings to the familiar, yet a flicker, a whisper within her, is already becoming Angelique. Maybe it's a conversation with a stranger, or a moment staring at the vast sky from the tarmac, where the name begins to form without explanation.

They said England was grey. I hadn't noticed, not really, until the morning I left it behind. The sky pressed low and heavy as if the heavens themselves resisted my departure. But there was no storm. Only mist. The mist that clung to rooftops, to boots, to breath. The mist that blurred the edges of the life I was walking away from.

My suitcase was half-empty. I told myself it was practical. But maybe, even then, I knew I was making space for something else. For hoping and dreaming of a new home amongst kangaroos and wallabies, as we had seen in the promotional videos for immigrants to Australia. Imagining sunny days at the beautiful beaches. So very inviting.

As we boarded the train at Stoke Station, I was too excited about starting a new life in a distant country to notice my mother's reaction to our departure. I watched as tears welled up in her eyes. I couldn't recall ever seeing her cry before. Her life had been tough, raising six children as a single mother. The years had taken their toll, and she looked old now.

At Southampton, I watched as the enormous ship was being boarded by hundreds of passengers.

The Ellenis isn't just a ship, it's a vessel for transformation. And "Melbourne" gleams like a word spoken in prophecy, not geography.

The gangway trembled beneath our feet, but I barely noticed. I was watching the faces, so many faces, some tear-streaked, some unreadable. A sea of strangers moving toward an unknown shore, each with their own ghosts, their own hopes folded into suitcases.

I carried more silence than luggage.

The ship's horn bellowed, low and mournful, as if marking not just departure, but the departure from who I had been. England shrank behind us, slowly, then suddenly. I pressed my hand against the cold railing and watched the dock fade into mist.

I didn't wave goodbye. Not because I wasn't grateful. But because something in me was already looking to the future.

I didn't know it then, but I was already walking toward a name I hadn't heard, yet somehow recognised. It would rise slowly, like the dawn, a name whispered long before someone spoke it aloud. This wasn't just a journey across oceans but across identities. The Sylvia who boarded the Ellenis carried more than a suitcase; she carried a destiny not yet revealed. Somewhere beyond the mist and motion, a name waited, not one given by man, but by God. *Angelique*. And though I couldn't yet speak it, I could feel its echo in my chest, like a promise just beginning to unfold.

Chapter Two:

Drift

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 soon began to forget what day it was. That felt like a kind of freedom.

Children were racing across the decks, couples squinting at the horizon, mothers clinging 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 recognise.

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 baby boy Anthony, 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, Ben, smiled from his deckchair; his eyes crinkled with that quiet knowing he always wore. Neither of us said it aloud, but we felt it, like 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 were 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.

“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, “Neither could I.”

There was nothing dramatic about 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.

Angelique.

Still not mine. Not yet. But drawing nearer, like land on the horizon.

Chapter Three:

The Mountain Between

The ship glided into Las Palmas beneath a sun-streaked sky, the harbour 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.

Below, something shimmered like a secret we weren't meant to keep. We only had a day, but time stretched wide again, just enough for wonder.

The cable car rocked gently as we rose, the bay unfolding behind us. My son pressed his fingers to the glass, eyes wide, babbling sounds he'd just found. Ben's hand found mine again, always silently.

Always present.

At the summit, the world stilled.

Clouds grazed our shoulders like breath. The wind curled around my ears, whispering nothing and everything. I stood near the edge and looked out, not toward England, not yet toward Australia, but out across the globe as if to ask. Who am I now?

I didn't expect an answer.

But I felt her. Not in voice, not in name. Just a presence beside my own, quiet and strong.

Becoming has many altitudes.

I walked a little ahead, the path winding between outcrops of stone worn smooth by centuries of weather. Tourists spoke in half a dozen languages behind us, their voices catching in the wind and scattering. Up here, even chatter couldn't disturb the stillness. The air felt thinner, purer like something sacred had been waiting at this altitude.

Anthony squealed as Ben hoisted him onto his shoulders. “Look, Mummy,” he laughed, pointing toward the sea with chubby fingers sticky from an apricot we’d bought on the dock. I followed his gaze, but it wasn’t the water I saw; it was distance. Possibility.

“Do you think this is what the Promised Land felt like?” I asked softly.

Ben smiled. “Maybe. But I don’t think we’ve reached it yet.”

We stood there, the three of us suspended between worlds. Below us: Africa, ancient and unblinking. Behind us: England, wrapped in mist and memory. And ahead, though we couldn’t yet see it, the hard and golden brightness of Australia.

I closed my eyes.

For the briefest moment, I didn’t feel like a woman or a wife or a mother. I felt like a messenger with no letter yet written. Like the words were coming, still inked in light, but not yet mine to speak. At the cable car’s base, I paused. So many faces. Dark, beautiful, weathered like the stone of the mountain behind them. Eyes that had seen a different kind of crossing. I felt suddenly small, like I was walking not just through a foreign land, but through someone else’s memory.

Anthony reached out to the porter, offering a cracker with joy. The man’s laughter was deep, surprising, and kind. In that moment, I realised how much I had to learn about grace, about reverence, about standing still in a place that did not belong to me.

For the first time since we’d left Southampton, I stopped narrating my story... and listened.

As we waited to re-board the ship, I glanced back one last time at the faces gathered near the docks. Many were dark-skinned, some selling fruit or trinkets, others simply watching. Their gazes weren’t unkind, but steady, grounded, like they carried the weight of stories older than mine, spoken in a language I had not yet earned the right to speak.

A young girl caught my eye, barefoot, balancing a bundle of cloth on her head with practised grace. She didn’t look at me as if I were different. She looked at me as if I were passing through. I was.

For a moment, I felt a disquiet I couldn’t name. Not guilt, not exactly. Not fear, just awareness. That the world was deeper than I had imagined. To become a messenger, I would first have to learn to listen

to histories that weren't mine, to voices long silenced by seas and names and forgetting.

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 remembered 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.

Chapter Four:

The girl with the bundle

My son stirred in my arms, pressing his head against my chest. I held him tighter and whispered a silent vow, not of certainty, but of openness.

Angelique would not be born only from my own journey. The silence would shape her between cultures, the beauty of difference, the ache of humility.

That night, as the ship pulled away from the South African coast, I stood alone on the deck while the city lights flickered behind us, soft as memory, sharp as regret.

I thought of the girl again, balancing her bundle with regal ease, her gaze unflinching. The girl hadn't uttered a word. She hadn't needed to. She showed me something essential: dignity can be carried even when the world tries to take it from you.

The sea wind tugged at my sleeves, salt clinging to my lips. I whispered a prayer I didn't yet know how to answer: *Break my heart for what breaks Yours.*

It wasn't guilt, it wasn't pity, it was the slow birth of a deeper seeing.

From that night onward, whenever I thought of injustice, whenever I heard silence where there should be a song, her face returned to me. *Angelique* was forming not just in my voice, but in my compassion. Not just through testimony, but through tenderness.

Africa had given me a name without speaking it and I would carry it forward with reverence.

Journal Entry | Somewhere Between Continents

The sea is gentler tonight.

My boy sleeps beside me, one foot peeking from under the borrowed blanket. His chest rises and falls like a tide I can trust. Ben breathes steadily, his hand resting near mine but not touching. Still, I feel the weight of his nearness.

But it's the girl's face I can't forget.

She couldn't have been more than twelve, yet her eyes bore no childlike fear, only patience, and something stronger. Dignity, maybe. Or was it resilience? She didn't ask for anything. She didn't flinch when our gazes met and when we drove away, she didn't follow.

She let me go.

But I don't think I'll ever be able to let her go. Not her face. Not the feeling she stirred in me like a match lit in the wind, refusing to go out.

Tonight, I understand something: *Angelique* will never be just my name. She will be the listener, the learner, the one who bends low before she speaks. One who carries others not as a burden, but as a blessing wrapped in history's ache.

Africa has given me more than a memory. It has given me a heart I didn't know I had, and with it, a responsibility I cannot turn from.

Lord, break me open, not to be shattered, but to become a vessel for You. Let me carry what matters.

The Ellenis held surprises, miracles of modernity floating above the deep. Ornate dining rooms stretched wider than any hall I'd ever eaten in. Chandeliers swayed gently with the ship's rhythm. Linen-clad tables gleamed under silver cutlery, and every evening felt like a celebration. There were olives, lamb stews rich with cinnamon, rice wrapped in grape leaves like little gifts. Flavours I had never tasted before. Flavours I would never forget.

Ben joked that the desserts alone were worth emigrating for.

And the pools, yes, pools. On a ship! Anthony squealed with delight the first time he dipped his toes into the shallows. Water shimmering beneath the open sky, salt air tangled in our hair, laughter echoing over the deck. Some days, it felt like a strange holiday. As if we were being gently rocked into newness, like a song you don't yet know the words to but already feel in your bones.

But even in the joy, I sensed a layering.

This abundance, this blessing, was not the destination. It was an oasis in the in-between. A place where bodies rested while souls whispered in corners between meals and midnight swims, *Angelique* stirred more surely. She was forming in the quiet between comfort and calling.

I met people whose names I would forget, but whose laughter stayed with me. An Irish nurse who'd worked in war zones told me how hope clings to the edges of everything. A Greek grandmother offered me baklava wrapped in foil and stories of a wedding she left behind. Somehow, between courses and corridors, we became pilgrims together, strangers with packed-up lives and dreams stitched into silence.

Ben spoke more freely at sea. Something about the horizon softened him. He made friends over espresso and backgammon, while our son charmed old men with his grin and gummy nonsense. I watched them from a deck chair one afternoon, sun warming my knees, and thought: *This is a kind of peace I never expected to find while in motion.*

At night, the ship glowed like a chandelier adrift in a sea of ink. I would slip away to write when the others slept. Just thoughts. Just questions. Why did abundance feel both comforting and confrontational? Why did silence make space for something holy?

Once, I looked at my reflection in the mirrored elevator walls and didn't fully recognise myself. Not lost... just loosening. The name *Angelique* was no longer foreign. It hovered in the stillness, as if waiting for permission to bloom.

Chapter Five:

Landfall

The harbour unfolded like a secret reluctantly told. Morning light hit the waves with sharp angles, turning them silver-bright, too bright after weeks of ocean haze. Melbourne rose in the distance, unfamiliar and broad-shouldered as if it were bracing itself to meet us.

I stood at the railing with Anthony in my arms. He reached out, fingers splayed, as though the city might draw closer if he touched it.

Ben placed his hand on the small of my back, grounding me. He didn't speak. He didn't need to. Everything was being said in the rhythm of the ship slowing, in the shouts of dockworkers below, in the tremble of the gangway being prepared.

I felt no triumph. Only stillness. Like something in me had finally arrived before my feet had even touched the soil. *Angelique* exhaled within me.

This was not the Promised Land, but it was a beginning. And beginnings, I was learning, always arrive dressed as thresholds.

The Barracks and the Threshold

Melbourne did not greet us with sunlight but with fences.

The migrant camp had once been an army barracks, long, low buildings with peeling paint and beds like ghosts of some war I hadn't fought. They handed us knives and forks at a desk like rationed dignity. Even the sink plugs had to be signed out, as if trust was something we hadn't yet earned. I tried to hold myself upright, but when the woman explained the rules in clipped efficiency, something inside me cracked. I cried quietly. Not from fear, but from the ache of becoming a stranger in the world.

Ben didn't say much. He wrapped his arm around my shoulder and held Anthony to his chest. Our son babbled, completely unaware that his mother felt like a prisoner on her arrival day.

Friends welcomed us into their home for a few weeks, a generosity that felt like breath, and then, like grace unfolding, we found a little rented house of our own. Nothing grand, but it was ours. The moment I closed the door behind us and heard only the heartbeat of our little family, I exhaled for the first time in weeks.

Ben found work as a tyre fitter. I found work in a dog grooming salon. Anthony received care during the day, and in the evenings, we gathered around simple meals, grateful and tired. Australia opened slowly, like a flower unsure if it would bloom for us. But it did.

And for a while... We were happy.

Chapter Six:

A Place to Belong

The house was small and smelled faintly of dust and eucalyptus, but when I stepped inside, I cried. Not from sadness, this time, from relief. No one was signing out sink plugs. No one was watching. For the first time since we'd disembarked, we were alone. And it was enough.

We unpacked quickly. Ben repaired the squeaky back door with borrowed tools. I scrubbed the kitchen tiles until they glowed. Anthony made a game of hiding behind the curtains and squealing when we found him. We didn't have much furniture, but we had light. Wide windows let the sun pour in like gold. At night, I'd sit on the back steps with a cup of tea, listening to the crickets and wondering if belonging always started in moments this quiet.

Ben rose early each morning and came home smelling of rubber and oil. His hands grew rougher, but he was always smiling. "Good, honest work," he'd say, and I believed him. I found work at a dog grooming salon. I'd never dried so many ears or clipped so many paws, but I was learning the language of simple routines, of shared laughter over sudsy sinks, of purpose found in what was right in front of me.

We were far from England. Far from the known. But somehow, in these early Australian days, *Angelique* began to live in me more fully. Not through grand visions, but through tenderness. Through resilience. Through choosing joy in small rooms with leaky taps and sunlight on the floor.

As I sit in quiet reflection, my thoughts drift back to those vivid childhood days filled with laughter and mischief, the memories of my brother George standing out the brightest. With his bright blue eyes sparkling with mischief and a wild mass of dark curls that framed his cherubic face, he had a way of lighting up our dusty, industrial town. It was as if he carried a burst of sunshine wherever he went, turning mundane moments into grand adventures.

I think of that unforgettable afternoon when he decided our six cats needed a bit of a thrill. With a cheeky grin, he tied handkerchiefs around their necks and, with the audacity only a child could muster, dropped them from our three-story window. I remember the way time seemed to freeze as I stood in shock, watching our feline friends sail through the air. Just then, our mother's sharp voice pierced the air from the kitchen, her eyes wide with horror as she caught sight of one of the cats soaring past the window.

"George!!!" she yelled, a mix of frustration and concern etched on her face. I rushed up the stairs, heart pounding, only to find the door locked. "Not the pregnant one!" she shouted, panic rising in her tone.

To my surprise, George's voice came bouncing back down the stairs, filled with delight. "That one went first!" His laughter echoed in the hallway, infectious and irrepressible, even amidst our mother's distress. I couldn't help but chuckle at the audacity of it all, imagining the cats fluttering down, safely cushioned by the leafy branches of the tree below.

After such wild adventures, I can still picture the scene at bedtime: George sprawled out on the bed, the cats nestled against him, happily tucked under his arms for comfort. They found solace in his presence, just as I always did. There was an undeniable bond between them, a shared understanding of the mischief they had survived, and a beauty in the security they found together as they drifted off to sleep.

George was never one to shy away from a thrill, his adventurous spirit once leading him to stick a fork into a light socket, a decision that could have ended much differently. Miraculously, he emerged from such escapades unscathed and bold. Today, he still carries that same dry sense of humour and laughs about his childhood antics, reminding me of the best friend I found in him amidst all our shared chaos.

Those memories are woven into the fabric of who I am, a reminder of joy and the irreplaceable bond we forged in our childhood home.

Chapter Seven:

Fruit and Flame

We chased wonder across Australia, in South Australia, Blue Lake's ancient stillness, the clean hush of Tasmanian air, and the bright laughter of Queensland's coast. I remember Anthony's sticky fingers at "The Big Pineapple," his joy erupting over a cup of fruit salad and cream. For a while, it felt like we were gathering light to store for the winter we didn't yet know was coming.

Anthony had developed a fascination with the jacaranda tree in the front yard. He called it his "whisper tree," claiming it told him stories when the wind blew just right. Sometimes I'd catch him lying on the grass beneath it, eyes narrowed in thought as if decoding its secrets. At night, he'd recite his day's discoveries: "The tree says the sky here is wider. And that magpies have opinions."

He made friends slowly, but fiercely. A girl named Maddy with a sun hat too big for her head became his partner in all things exploratory, from counting ant trails to building elaborate forts out of cardboard and couch cushions. He still asked about England sometimes, about rain, about Nanna, but the questions came less often, the way a dream fades once you've had breakfast and laughter.

We watched him grow braver, and more curious. His tantrums softened into questions, his silences into observations. He wasn't just adjusting, he was becoming. Becoming someone who belonged not just here, but wholly to himself.

It was a warm Thursday when we were called into the school office. Miss Alvarez, Anthony's teacher, met us with a calm smile and a folded note.

"There was a moment during group time," she said. "A classmate commented on Anthony's 'strange accent.' Before I could step in, he responded on his own."

She handed us the note. Anthony had written it during recess:

“My voice sounds different because it’s full of places. England, yes, but also this street, this classroom, my whisper tree. I like it. It’s all mine.”

Ben blinked back tears. I felt something soften and shift, the way bark splits for new growth.

That night, we let Anthony stay up late. He crunched popcorn between his teeth and told us about how Maddy had chimed in after: “Well, I think it sounds like an adventure.” He grinned. “She said I should be in a movie.”

In the quiet afterwards, when the dishes were done and the windows breathed in moonlight, I realised how much he was teaching us, not just how to belong, but how to name it out loud.

On Sundays, we walked to the park three blocks down, where the gum trees leaned like old sentries and the swings creaked with the rhythm of laughter. Anthony chased lorikeets while Ben sat cross-legged on the grass, sketching in a dog-eared notebook he'd kept since art school. We didn't know what we were building, exactly, only that it was ours. A patchwork of routine, stitched with sunlit mornings and sleepy dinners.

The neighbours began waving. At first politely, then warmly baking extra biscuits, offering cuttings from their garden, telling us stories that dated back two floods and three prime ministers. Their names knitted themselves into our days like a pattern we didn't realise we'd missed.

Then 1975 arrived with both aches and miracles.

I was thirty-one. Anthony, nearly seven. And to my surprise, new life interrupted the quiet emptiness between Ben and me. A pregnancy neither of us expected, but both leaned into, desperate for connection.

Sometimes I'd find myself standing still in the hallway, hand resting on the doorframe, struck by the odd peace that had settled into my chest. I miss England differently now, not with ache, but with gratitude. Like remembering a childhood song. Angelique lived in those moments, too. In the way I held Anthony after a bad dream. In

the softness with which I kissed Ben goodnight. In the courage it took to let new roots reach down, quietly, beneath foreign soil.

At the hospital, a false alarm teased my hope. But two weeks later, she came, *Sharon*. A name I had cradled in my heart since before I knew her. She arrived with eyes like dusk and a calm I hadn't known could exist inside me. Breastfeeding her felt like holding time still. For a while, I embraced the sacred simplicity of mothering.

Business grew. I hired help, juggled children and scissors and shampoo, and somehow kept it all upright. We were, on the surface, content.

But beneath the clean floors and dinnertime smiles, the cracks deepened. And eighteen months after Sharon was born, fourteen years after I said, "I do", I couldn't pretend anymore.

I left.

Took my children, my few pets, and moved in with a friend. I wasn't angry. I was exhausted. And somewhere deep in the silence that followed, *Angelique* took another step forward, not as a woman fleeing failure, but as one stepping into freedom.

Chapter Eight:

Northbound and Unravelling

We began as seekers of opportunity, he with debts to erase, I with roots to revisit. It had been ten years since I'd seen my mother. Her letters had grown shaky, her memory clouded. I booked the ticket, bundled Sharon into my arms, and left Anthony in his stepfather's care. England greeted us with grey skies and grace. Mum had suffered strokes, but she smiled when she saw me. Time softened. We shared cups of tea, memories, and forgiveness. For a few short weeks, I was a daughter again.

When I returned to Australia, the road rose before us like a promise. We drove for three weeks, from Queensland's green fringes to Cairns' mangroves, where sandflies left their mark on all of us. Through the outback we wandered, crickets our choir and stars were our ceiling. I'd never experienced such silence. Such endlessness.

In Darwin, heat greeted us like a wall. Forty degrees every day. No relief. We lived in a caravan that baked beneath the sun, and I was newly pregnant, sick, swelling, stifled. Still, we married, witnessed only by the couple next door at the caravan park. It felt more like agreement than celebration.

So, I became Sylvia Suhr. I tried to believe in a second chance. He had been kind once. We both loved animals. There was laughter, briefly. But when life pressed in, sweat-soaked and sleepless, I saw the cracks widen. I mistook survival for love. I mistook proximity for intimacy.

That night, as I curled beside the children, the caravan creaked under the heat and the weight of choices I wasn't ready to name. But in that stillness, I remembered the girl with the bundle. Strong, watchful. Dignified in a world that saw her only in passing. I whispered her back into memory as if her gaze could steady me. Angelique stirred again, not as an escape, but as an invitation.

That year scorched me. Not just because of the heat, but because I let go of who I was for someone who could not hold me. And yet, it would be from this parched ground that *Angelique* would rise again.

Chapter Nine:

Smoke and Silence

Leisel came into the world quietly, her cries soft, her breath sure. A caesarean left me sore, but holding her turned pain into devotion. I breastfed her in the hush of early hours, the caravan still, the air heavy with heat, and felt joy that surprised me. She was light.

At six weeks old, we packed up again, back to Melbourne, back to what we knew. Wine glasses, parties, cigarette smoke, and music that tried to drown the questions we didn't ask each other filled our lives once more.

I kept working, always working. Bought another dog grooming salon, Milady's Poodle Boutique and folded myself into it like it could save me. Auntie Thelma helped care for the children. She was blind, but her sight ran deeper than ours. Her hands were steady, her wisdom quiet, her faith unwavering. I didn't recognise the gift she had then, not fully.

I had been burning the candle at both ends, business by day, wine and numbing by night when the silence inside me began to whisper again. It was faint, like footsteps in another room. But I recognised them. Angelique didn't ask for much. Only the truth. Only room to breathe.

I fell pregnant again. And lost the baby at three months. I didn't tell many people. Grief whispered through me, not with sobs but with a lingering numbness.

That night, while the house exhaled its cigarette smoke and silence, I stood by the kitchen sink, hands submerged in cooling dish water. I wasn't praying. I wasn't speaking. But something sacred stood beside me in the quiet. No miracles. No signs. Just the still sense that I was not as alone as I thought.

I turned thirty-eight, and the silence inside me grew louder. It had been twenty years since I'd stepped inside a church. Twenty years since I'd thought of God as anything more than a distant memory. But now, something stirred. Not guilt. Not fear. Just... hunger. The life I

was living no longer fit me. My heart, once wild with longing, was now quietly folding away from the man I had tried so hard to love.

I was still Sylvia, but *Angelique* stood at the edge, watching, waiting, whispering telling me of a different way.

Russell was born with wide eyes and a softness I didn't know I needed. Holding him rewrote my desires. Suddenly, business meant little. I didn't want to chase clients or balance ledgers. I wanted to be home. To raise my son. To gather my children close and create something I had longed for all my life: peace.

So, I sold the business. And almost immediately, he left.

It wasn't explosive. It wasn't cruel. It was just... absence. We had grown apart, thread by thread, until there was nothing left to unravel. My talk of identity and spiritual longing only pushed him further away. He returned to his mother's house. I was left with the silence, the children, and the long nights of wondering why love had never been enough to hold us.

My world had narrowed to bottle feeds and careful budgeting. I wrapped my identity around nappies and meat trays and the ticking of the broken kitchen clock. But under the humdrum of routine, the ache was becoming unbearable. I no longer wanted to be "fine." I wanted fire. I needed presence. Whatever had whispered "*Angelique*" all those years ago on the ship, I wanted her to speak again.

Chapter Ten:

The Woman with the Cappuccino

I was working in a café where many of the regulars were immersed in practices of witchcraft and spiritual confusion. It was a place heavy with unseen energies, and I often felt the subtle undercurrents stirring beneath the surface.

One day, a woman walked in and ordered a cappuccino. She was slim, with flowing dark hair and a quiet confidence that immediately drew my attention. Something about her presence felt radiant, almost illuminated from within. I couldn't help but sit with her, sensing that this encounter was about to shape my life in ways I couldn't yet imagine.

Her name was Shirley, and she invited me to sit. I listened. As we talked, I listened closely. Her words were bold, yet gentle, filled with conviction and light. She spoke of being “born again” and described a deeply personal relationship with God. I was captivated not only by what she said, but by the certainty in her voice. Then she looked at me and declared, “You must be born again to see the kingdom of God.”

I was stunned, not offended, but deeply challenged. Her faith was unlike anything I'd encountered before. Like Nicodemus in John chapter 3, I couldn't fully grasp what she meant. My spirit had not yet been awakened, and the truth she carried stirred a longing I didn't yet understand.

She invited me to church. I said I would go.

And I meant it.

That Sunday, I stood at the edge of the church doorway, and Russell pressed against my chest in the sling. The children filed in ahead, Anthony holding the hand of a greeter with the assuredness of someone who has never doubted welcome. I, on the other hand, hesitated. My faith, until now, had been like mist, felt but never held.

The singing startled me. Not for its volume, but for its rawness, voices untrained, yet unified. Shirley waved from a pew near the front. I slid

in beside her, knees brushing polished timber. She didn't whisper advice or explain the rituals. She just held my hand when the prayers came, and that was sermon enough.

Afterwards, a woman with a nose ring and a baby on her hip invited me to morning tea. Someone else remembered my name. A man in overalls asked how I took my cappuccino. And for the first time in months, I laughed. Not the polite chuckle reserved for school pick-ups, but the kind that rises unexpectedly, like a child popping up from beneath a blanket.

Later that week, I found myself humming a hymn while hanging out laundry. I didn't know the words, but the melody had settled into my bones like breath. I wasn't sure where this road led or if it would culminate into belief, or just keep expanding with questions. But I no longer needed certainty to feel held. Something was unfurling. Softly. Steadily.

Chapter Eleven:

The Cry Room

I hadn't gone looking for God. Not exactly. I'd gone looking for breath. Movement. A place where the ache inside me might quiet if only for an hour. The church hall smelled faintly of linoleum and dust, the aerobics instructor chirping commands over a cassette tape that chewed the edges of every song. "Feel the burn," she said. I barely felt anything at all.

But afterwards, thirsty and flushed, I wandered down the hallway and saw a door marked *Cry Room*. I wasn't sure if it was for babies or people like me, women who had held too much inside, too long. I stepped in before I could overthink it.

Inside: silence. Books lined the walls, Bibles mostly, and commentaries with cracked spines. No incense. No whispers. Just words waiting.

Angelique stirred.

Not in fire. Not in thunder. In quiet.

I was thumbing through a concordance when people began to arrive. I started backing out apologetically when someone smiled and said gently, "You can stay."

I didn't know you could *study* the Bible like that.

The group leader later invited me to meet his wife, Alison. I went. Not knowing why, just tired. Needing... something.

She brewed tea. Listened. Didn't offer advice, just presence.

And then she said, "Just give your life to Jesus."

I shook my head. "It can't be that easy." But it was.

Right there, in a quiet house at the edge of my unravelling, I surrendered. Not with fanfare, just hands opened inwardly. I said yes. To grace. To mercy. To Someone who had been waiting since before I knew my own name.

The next few days, I went into the church every morning. Not because I was told to, but because I was hungry. Watching. Waiting. Expecting fireworks, perhaps. But instead, there was peace. And the soft, steady dawning of something ancient and new.

I was no longer just recovering. I was reborn.

Like the verse I would later memorise:

"If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come." 1 Corinthians 5:17.

Chapter Twelve:

A New Name

The church didn't crack open the sky. But it cracked me.

I kept walking in each morning, sitting in the stillness like a woman waiting for a train she couldn't quite explain. No one asked me to come. No one told me what to do. I just... did. Something inside me was unfolding.

I started reading the bible with fresh eyes. Words that once felt dusty now pulsed with life. "New creation," it said. "Beloved." I had lived under labels all my life: single mum, failure, too much, not enough. But now, a whisper moved through me: *You are mine*.

Memories from my childhood came back to me. Our house was two doors away from a church, and even as a young child, I remember wanting to go inside, but my Mum told me that I wasn't dressed well enough to go in there. I could hear the beautiful music and people singing hymns even as I played in the sand pit at home, and I was drawn to God from an early age, but I didn't recognise that until later in life.

I attended St James School, which was a High Anglican Church school, and I remember singing the old hymns and being taught from the Bible.

The King of love, my shepherd is,

Whose goodness faileth never.

I lack nothing if I am His

And he is mine forever.

Those words meant nothing to me then, but now became very dear to me as I was awakening to God's love. I felt very important when, sometimes, I was picked by Miss Parks, my favourite teacher, to read the Bible lesson on the stage in front of about 500 children. I must have been good at reading out loud. I think this was also preparation for what was to come later.

I began noticing changes. Not dramatic, but unmistakable. I no longer craved the same parties. The cigarettes started to taste bitter. I wasn't trying to be better, I just didn't need the same escapes anymore. Peace had a new address, and it was inside me.

The children saw it too. There was more laughter. More music. Fewer tears at night.

I visited Alison again, we prayed, we talked, and we baked biscuits. Faith wasn't a performance with her; it was warmth, hospitality, and truth that sat quietly at the table without demanding anything.

One morning, I looked in the mirror and didn't recognise myself. Not because of lines or age or weariness, but because, for the first time in years, I saw someone I wanted to know.

Her name was Sylvia.

But maybe... maybe she was *Angelique* too.

Chapter Thirteen:

Wind and Fire

I didn't know what to expect when I knocked on her door. The cafe had been one thing, but in her home, Shirley was alive in a way that felt almost wild. She danced across the carpet with abandon, singing in a language I didn't understand, arms raised like wind caught in prayer.

She glowed. I blushed.

"You can do this too," she said, laughing like joy had taken root in her bones.

I wasn't sure I wanted to. Not yet. But I let her pray, nodded politely, and left, bewildered.

The next day, in my car with the children, the strangest thing happened. A sound rose in me, unbidden, unfamiliar. A song, not from memory, but from somewhere deeper. I was singing in tongues. And in that moment, I knew something had shifted. Someone had found me.

Baptised in the Holy Spirit.

Alive!

I threw myself into church and joined a twelve-week discipleship class. It wasn't just teaching, it was laying of foundation stones. Repentance. Salvation. Baptism. Purpose. My mind was opening, but more importantly, my spirit was waking up.

Russell came down with a fever one Wednesday night, hot skin, glassy eyes, the tiny, shallow breaths that send panic spiralling through a mother's body. I rang the after-hours clinic, then Shirley. I didn't even realise I'd called her until she answered.

"Stay calm," she said. "I'm on my way."

She arrived twenty minutes later, hair tucked under a scarf, holding a tin of cooled peach slices and a soft muslin cloth. While I rocked Russell in the hallway, she tucked Anthony into bed and wiped down

the bathroom tiles, humming as she worked. She left just before midnight after I promised I'd call if his fever rose again.

The next morning, I found a grocery bag on the doorstep, formula, tissues, and the good kind of tea bags. A note tucked inside read, "*You're not alone. Love, your Wednesday group.*"

That Sunday, when I arrived at church, someone had saved me a seat. Another woman slipped her hand into mine during worship, no words, just presence. And I realised this was what belonging looked like. Not the absence of hardship, but the presence of others within it.

I was baptised in water a few weeks later. The spa was small, tucked away in a friend's backyard, but it felt like sacred ground. When asked what song I wanted to be played, the words leapt out before I could think: *Amazing Grace*.

It was grace. All of it.

From that moment on, I didn't hold back. I was *hungry* for the things of God. I shared Jesus with anyone who'd listen. Not from duty, but from joy. Pure and deep.

I was still raising children. Still alone in the world's eyes. But I wasn't empty anymore. And I wasn't lost. I had found the One who called me by name.

And *Angelique*, who once searched through deserts, dreams, and grief, was now stepping into her true identity.

Chapter Fourteen:

The Shelter and the Song

My son, Anthony, returned home for a time. He found work, sat in church pews, and even listened to the gospel message with that thoughtful tilt of his head. I thought perhaps... this was it. A new beginning. Coming home.

But he didn't respond.

And then one day, he packed his things and left again, to be with a girl. Just like that. No ceremony. No goodbye, that felt like enough.

Soon after, the house we lived in fell into disrepair. We had to move. Quickly. The younger children went to stay with their father.

That part broke me quietly, handing them over again, trusting that they would be safe without my arms wrapped around them.

I took my eldest daughter, Sharon, and we went somewhere I never thought I'd go: a refuge called Summerled, tucked away in the forest hush of Marysville. A place of second chances. Of other women's heartbreaks and beginnings.

It wasn't home. But it held us.

I prayed often in whispers back then. Not for answers, but for the strength to keep walking. Faith doesn't always roar; sometimes it's the silent step into unfamiliar rooms, trusting the floor will hold.

Chapter Fifteen:

God's mercy wrapped in a stamp.

Marysville was more than a place of refuge; it was a sanctuary for my soul.

I walked each morning through the rainforest, breathing in eucalyptus and birdsong, singing prayers aloud. No crowd, no script, just me and God. Sometimes the path climbed steeply, and I'd hear it clearly, deep in my spirit: *"Just one foot in front of the other. It will be worth it when you reach the top."*

And it was. The views, rolling hills, filtered light, and landscapes carved by grace. I wasn't just walking through the bush. I was learning to walk with God.

One day I wandered farther than I meant to. Five hours passed. I didn't recognise where I was. But I felt no fear. I expected to find a fallen tree around the next bend. And there it was. I smiled. I was never truly lost. Not with Him inside me.

I didn't panic. I simply stood, surrounded by trees older than memory, and felt... seen. The air shimmered like breath held too long. The Spirit was there, not as rescue, but as a reminder:

"Even when you've lost your bearings, I haven't lost sight of you."

Then came the telegram.

Mum was gone.

I cried. for hours, maybe more. And then God reminded me of the song we'd sung the night before, words from 1 John, about confidence, about asking in His will, about being heard.

I had sent her a letter just weeks earlier. I'd told her everything, about Jesus, about the new life blooming inside me. My sister wrote back to say how strange, how perfectly timed it was. I believe Mum is waiting for me in heaven. That letter was my farewell gift. God's mercy wrapped in a stamp.

In those quiet days, I devoured books, *Hinds' Feet on High Places*, *A Man Called Peter*, stories of God using ordinary people for extraordinary things. I dared to dream that He might use me, too.

Then came the invitation to teach scripture at the local school.

My knees trembled walking into that room of wide-eyed five-year-olds. The Catholic teacher smiled kindly; she knew this was a holy risk for me. And slowly, week by week, I found my rhythm. The children listened. I taught them what I was learning: that trusting Jesus didn't need to be complicated, it just needed to be real.

For seven years, I taught scripture, first in Victoria, then interstate. It wasn't glamorous work, but it shaped me. It taught me to keep the message clear. Simple. Like Jesus did.

In Marysville, I missed my younger two children terribly. For months, I had no way to see them. When I finally got a car, I drove three hours just to spend a few hours with them. Each time I left, my two-year-old would scream until I disappeared down the road. I'd stop the car and sob into the wheel. My heart stretched thinner than it had ever been.

But then God made a way.

They came back to me.

Chapter Sixteen:

A House of Small Miracles

We rented a little house in town for a year. Every night we prayed at our family altar. Not a fancy space, just a spot where our prayers met heaven. We made a list of everything we needed for our home. Beds. Cutlery. Curtains. And one by one, those prayers were answered. Each tick on that list was a miracle.

We were given a brown guinea pig, which we called Basil. The kids loved having a pet to care for.

There weren't many Spirit-filled believers in town. Only three others spoke in tongues. But we would encourage one another, finding joy in small circles of fire.

It was here I met Heather.

A hairdresser. Single mum. Guide leader. Founder of the singles group Segula. Heather was joy wrapped in music and strength. We threw dinner parties, skits, and games nights. She and I would sing together, her guitar, my shaky alto. I still remember our duet of *The Rose*. She brought so much light.

A few years later, cancer took her.

My faith wavered.

But not for long. Because by then, I'd learned that even when we grieve, grace remains. And Marysville had given me that, it gave me back my children. It gave me a vision for ministry. It gave me community, laughter, and early mornings with God.

After a year, we moved to Healesville, to a government house that became our haven for seven more years. There, I found a Pentecostal church. Small home groups. Flickers of revival that began to burn again in my chest.

We were putting the pieces back together. Not perfectly. But beautifully.

Chapter Seventeen:

The Caravan and the Calling

Pancakes and muffins, that's how I measured wealth in those days.

I'd started up my grooming business again, this time from a caravan I outfitted with benches and cages. It wasn't glamorous, but it worked. And it kept me close to home. Close enough to greet the children after school, to hear stories of bus adventures and lunchtime miracles over cinnamon and jam.

That season was golden.

With the extra income, they attended a Christian school. Their faith deepened alongside mine. At night, I'd put the kettle on and turn on the second-hand video player Jimmy had loaned me, Kenneth Copeland, Jimmy Swaggart, Joyce Meyer. I devoured every tape like it was bread from heaven, feeding my faith and fanning a hunger for something... more.

I enrolled part-time at the Bible College of Victoria. Then trained further at Mount Evelyn Christian Fellowship, where we started attending church. Eventually, it made sense to move again, this time to Lilydale.

We found a farmhouse. Chickens, goats, dogs, and cats. The rhythm of life beat a little slower, closer to the earth. My youngest daughter discovered horses and her voice. She rode, she drew, she dreamed. Sharon, meanwhile, had joined Youth with A Mission and filled our home with stories and books like *Is That Really You, God?*

It stirred something deep inside me.

Another move. Another surrender. We sold everything and took the train to Yass to join YWAM Canberra. The children weren't thrilled, I was asking a lot. But I knew in my bones, this was obedience.

Base life was simple. Purposeful. The younger two started school again. I was in full-time mission training. We were, in every sense, *all in*.

Then came the horse.

My youngest daughter came home glowing, fire in her eyes. “Mum, I want to buy a horse. His name is Timmy.” I smiled and said, “We’ll pray.” She leaned in. “I mean it, Mum.”

So, we prayed.

God gave us ten reasons to say yes. And just like that, Timmy became hers. They were inseparable for years.

Today, she’s an equine artist.

Back then, she was just a girl with a pencil and a dream. And I was just a mum with a caravan and a calling.

Chapter Eighteen:

The Narrow Hearth

We stayed behind while others went abroad, the outreach fading like a promise we couldn't hold onto. The children weren't ready, and truthfully, neither was I. There's a stubborn grace in staying put when everything in you wants to run for God. So, I worked on staff in the kitchen, staff with children, apron-bound and wide-eyed in wonder at how ministry could look like peeling carrots and wiping down benches.

Mountain Trails

By the time the wind had softened in Wee Jasper, we were no longer trying to chase purpose so much as learn how to be still with it. The mountains didn't speak in prophetic visions; they whispered through morning mist and warm bread rising in the oven.

Gary and Ruth became our steady hands. Ruth had the kind of voice that wrapped around your shoulders on cold mornings. Gary never said more than needed, but when he did, it felt like Scripture. Jed, our black dog, arrived that winter. He looked like he'd been carved from shadow, but his joy was bright, bounding through gum leaves like a hymn.

We rented a little cottage named Rangeview Cottage, where I homeschooled Russell, at the table near the window where the ivy tried to crawl in. The others took the long bus to Yass each morning, lunchboxes slung low and sighs heavier than backpacks. At night, we read aloud or dug trenches for tomatoes, our laughter winding up into the trees.

Later, in town, life unfolded differently. We moved into a farmhouse outside Yass, windy plains and paint-flaked fences. The church we found was called Eagle's Nest, which felt fitting. I was tired of fleeing. I wanted to settle, however, I found myself teaching scripture in the schools again, which I loved.

But children don't always follow the same path. The high school wasn't like the ones my children had come from, less structure, more

boredom. The shift came slowly, like smoke through a crack. They started sneaking out. I grounded my son. I warned him: if you leave, the dog goes to the pound. He left anyway.

In the next house, we had neighbours who drummed loudly into the night. Aboriginal families, mostly kind, sometimes too rowdy. One man told me once that he'd seen an angel at my door. "Tall one," he said, not looking me in the eye. "Big sword." I smiled, not because I was sure he was right, but because something in me knew it to be true.

The work I did then wasn't glorious. Cleaning offices, cooking for elders at the retirement home, and mopping the police station floors before dawn. One morning, I touched a computer mouse and it leapt to life. I nearly dropped my cloth in fright. The constable laughed when I told him. "Guess the system likes you," he said. Maybe it did. Or maybe it was time I stopped fearing things I didn't understand.

They were very kind and explained to me that it wasn't a problem, as the computers automatically start up when the mouse is moved. It was at that moment that I decided to learn how to use a computer. I went home and told my son, who helped me overcome my fear and learn how to use the computer.

Our church ran a Christian bookshop in town, and I helped manage it for about 18 months. This was a wonderful opportunity for me to meet people from various denominations in Yass. It also gave me plenty of time to minister to many locals and people passing through the town.

I spent a lot of time listening to Christian music, reading, and praying. I enjoyed helping to run the business and decided to take a small business management course at the local TAFE College.

After the bookshop closed, I started my own business called "Angels on Assignment," which involved cleaning houses for working people. I enjoyed this work, as it allowed my daughter to join me, and she became a very proficient cleaner too. I ran the business for quite some time before deciding I didn't want to clean houses anymore. I then took a job as a cook at a local aged care home.

Our pastor often went on mission trips to the Philippines, so I decided to join him on one of these trips with the Australian Philippines Mission. It was a miracle crusade, involving preaching the gospel with signs and wonders following.

A group of 25 of us from different parts of New South Wales participated. We had six weeks of training before we left, learning how to share a simple testimony of our salvation and how to preach a clear, simple gospel message. This training proved to be very valuable for future missions.

We were away for ten days, and it was a life-changing experience for all of us. We saw thousands give their lives to Christ as we preached the gospel, and many miracles occurred as we prayed for the lame, the deaf, and the blind.

I remember praying for an elderly lady whose eyes were glazed over and grey. Before my eyes, I saw her eyes changing colour, and she said through an interpreter that she could see clearly.

Deaf ears were opened as we laid hands on each person in turn. There were shouts of joy as people who had been lame for many years were able to walk again.

The wonderful thing about missions like this is witnessing how people can receive salvation and healing through simple faith, trusting in God to fulfil His promises.

I love the lifestyle of these indigenous people and their simple faith. They have a wonderful closeness with their families and are grateful for simple things.

When I returned from the Philippines, I was changed. I knew I could never live a mediocre life again and was destined to be a pioneer missionary.

Chapter Nineteen:

Arms to Hold Them

I was living alone by then. The rooms, once loud with quarrels and laughter, sat hushed under the weight of old toys and mothballed dreams. The children were grown, scattered like dandelion seeds on the wind, and I was left with a silence I hadn't made peace with. That's when the couple came, missionaries to Kenya, speaking softly from the pulpit at Eagle's Nest, their words heavy with purpose.

Something stirred deep in me. Not excitement. Not fear. A holy ache.

I went home and opened my Bible. The verse in Matthew waited like a whisper behind the veil:

Whoever leaves houses or brothers or sisters... for my name's sake will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.

I knew what I had to do.

I sold everything again, the china, the new lounge sweet that had taken me two years to pay for, the framed photos. I told no one how my hands shook as I bought the ticket. Faith, they say, is sometimes just the act of climbing the stairs in the dark.

On the way to the airport, I stopped at a small church service, unsure why. I sat beside a woman whose skin was worn like river stone and eyes like a sky long remembered. When I told her I was going to Kenya, she wept. "I was the first missionary woman to Ethiopia," she said. "Africa is a part of me," I asked her to pray for me. As she laid hands on me, the room disappeared, and I felt the weight of nations settle in my heart.

From Sydney, I met the team. I told them I wouldn't return with them. There was more for me there, something unfinished.

I closed my eyes and let the engines hum their lullaby. Beneath the noise, a hush settled deep in my spirit, the kind that doesn't ask for words. It felt like a seal being placed on my "yes". The woman's prayer still lingered like oil on my head. The Spirit whispered nothing, and yet, I heard everything.

Kenya didn't welcome us with ease. It welcomed us with children too small for motherhood, with rain-soaked crusades, and with joy dancing barefoot over red earth. We preached the gospel, and the heavens waited until our final "Amen" before opening again. When we finished praying, laughter scattered into the dusk like birds startled from the trees.

Some of the girls, six, seven, carried babies on their backs. The nappies were rags. The latrines were pits dug hastily between trees. And still, they sang. Still, they came to hear.

God broke my heart there. He had warned me:

My children are dying with no arms to hold them.

When the team left, I stayed behind, working with a towering pastor whose laughter cracked like thunder over the village paths. We walked miles together, going hut to hut, telling stories of redemption, watching eyes fill and hearts turn. A church rose from the soil of those meetings.

Each Sunday, I preached at a different Anglican church. I talked of fire and Spirit, of tongues and healing, of grace falling like morning dew. I visited schools where rows of little hands reached for the sky, ready to receive Jesus like He was bread in a famine.

I slept in mud huts and rode Boda Bodas through fields slick with rain. I tasted ugali and sukuma wiki, (kale), beside grandmothers wrapped in colourful kitenge cloth. I learned to laugh with no electricity and hope with no guarantee.

And I met death.

There was a little boy I'd seen a few weeks earlier, who was sick and very small. We paid for his care. When I returned, he was wrapped in sweat-drenched blankets in a dark hut. He died not long after. I cried like a mother does, even when the child is not hers. I'd been told they stop caring for these children, those orphaned by AIDS, because they're "expected to die too."

Expected. As if breath were a luxury.

That was when the vision came. *Heaven on Earth*. A place to hold them. To feed and cradle and tell them they matter before the world has a chance to lie to them.

Later, in Kakamega, the hospital stank of blood and neglect. People lay on plastic mats, too weak to protest. We preached, and some walked out healed. Some never walked again. But they left, and they were different.

And then there was the children's home.

Thirty babies, no older than six months, lined up in rows like discarded prayers. A sister nursed three at a time while another changed their nappies with the steadiness of grace. She asked if I could stay. I nearly did. My heart collapsed at the doorway.

One of our team, a mother grieving her loss, found a child she wished to adopt. We had no money. But God has no ledger, only miracles. We prayed. Somehow, somehow, the funds began to come.

I left the next morning, the bus rattling toward Nairobi, the road rising like a question I'd already answered with my life.

Chapter Twenty:

The Road to Mbita

I thought I knew what I was returning to. I didn't.

The road from Nairobi to Mbita wasn't a road at all but a promise wrapped in dust and diesel and chicken feathers. The buses groaned under the weight of hope, mattresses, timber, crates of squawking hens, and women cradling babies who never once cried. Twelve hours of jostling over potholes and prayers. By the time we arrived, the world was a blur of sweat and weary limbs. I fell asleep as if God had folded the corner of the page on a new chapter.

My hosts lived in a home that felt almost foreign in its comfort, electricity, a working toilet, and even Christian satellite channels from Nairobi. Yet the presence of comfort was not the same as the absence of need. That lesson would come quickly.

I was introduced to a Pentecostal pastor who had eyes like polished wood, warm, deep, and searching. When he spoke of his vision, it echoed mine as though our prayers had met in heaven before we'd met on earth. Preach the Word. Reach the orphans. Teach the children. Break the chains. So, we joined hands across continents and called it ministry.

We rode from village to village, me seated on the back of a bicycle, the gospel tucked under our tongues like wild honey. Seven house fellowships rose from soil and spirit. So many came. So many wept. One woman greeted us with a tongue I didn't understand, but her eyes told the whole story: *We've waited for this.*

And then came the miracle.

She lay by the roadside, twisted awkwardly near a bicycle. Her husband howled, the sound tore the heat from the air. Her eyes had rolled back, mouth slack. Death hovered, indifferent. The pastor spoke sharply in Swahili, commanding the spirit of death to flee. I rubbed her face and prayed in tongues until my voice cracked. Suddenly, her eyes fluttered like moths caught in sunlight. We helped

them on their way to the clinic, but we never saw them again. Walking away, I asked aloud, “Did that really happen?”

It had the shape of a dream. But the imprint it left was real.

Dache Village

Further inland, under the rustling hush of banana leaves, was Dache. A village known not for its promise but for its fear. Word reached us of the sickness there. Worms, poverty, children wilting in the heat. But more than that, witchcraft. A wall of superstition too thick for medicine to breach.

We went anyway.

House to house we went, barefoot on sacred ground, preaching salvation where silence had once reigned. Sixteen gave their lives to Jesus that day. One woman, Rose, lay dying on a woven mat. We prayed. She rose. Her praise rose higher.

The next day, we brought medicine. They welcomed it like rainfall in a drought.

But poverty has a rhythm of its own. Twenty-four houses, no latrines. Just thorn bushes and shame. We offered to buy the supplies if they provided the labour. They nodded. Later, they shook their heads. *Not unless you pay us.*

We paid in persuasion instead. It took six months and countless visits. But the latrines were built. Maybe not with joy, but with change hidden in the mortar.

Seeds were planted, literal ones, too. A donor in England sent funds for tools and vegetable gardens. Ten schools. Ten chances to grow both food and discipline. But commitment is a scarce resource where survival is king. Some teachers kept the seeds for themselves. Most children found the distance to the lake too long, the heat too harsh. One school succeeded. Just one. But it stood like a candle refusing to flicker out.

A thousand acts of grace. Only God knew which would take root.

There’s a kind of silence in certain villages that doesn’t come from stillness but from strain, the hush that comes when no one expects

miracles anymore. I used to walk into those silences with a Bible, a warm smile, and the belief that if I listened long enough, the Spirit would speak.

The pastor and I became known as the ones who *showed up*. He had a quiet dignity, always with a cloth to polish his shoes before entering a hut, and a Scripture ready like a lamp for dim places. His name was Julius, but the locals called him *Mwalimu*—teacher. They called me *Mama Angelique*. At first, out of politeness. Later, out of something closer to love.

There was a fellowship in a village called Kitulu. A cluster of women met each week under a spreading acacia tree, babies swaying on their backs. Some couldn't read, but they could recite whole chapters from memory. One woman, Amina, always brought an extra cup of tea for me, milky and strong, flavoured with ginger and survival. She'd buried three children. Still, she lifted her hands in worship like nothing could keep them tethered to earth.

It was during one of those gatherings that the whisper came again: *Heaven on Earth*.

Not heaven someday. Not heaven in doctrine. But heaven, where babies are not wrapped in blankets and left behind. Where water is clean. Where praise is not something people offer in hunger, but something they offer in health.

When we finished praying, Amina pressed a necklace of beads into my palm. "For the vision," she said. "Build what we cannot yet imagine."

That night, I sat alone and wept. Not out of sorrow, but out of the sheer holiness of knowing I could no longer unsee the need.

Chapter: Twenty-One:

The Blueprint of Grace

The idea didn't come like a trumpet blast from heaven. It came quietly, the way dew gathers on a tin roof, one drop at a time. First, in the children's faces: wide-eyed, silent, too tired to hope. Then, in Amina's prayer beads pressed into my palm like currency for something holy. And finally, in my sleep, where I dreamed not of buildings but of arms. Arms that held, that healed, that never let go.

I began sketching the vision in my journal by candlelight. A home for the abandoned. Not an orphanage, not an institution, something gentler. A place where music played during bath time, where vegetables grew beside little shoes drying on a line. Where healing wasn't just prayed for, but built into the rhythm of meals, medicines, and morning routines.

I showed the drawings to Pastor Julius one morning after prayer. He studied them in silence.

"This is from God," he said. "But it will not be easy."

I nodded. Nothing of worth ever is.

He offered land, a half-acre behind a small school outside Mbita. "No one wants this place," he told me. "The soil is dry, the road too rocky. But maybe that's where heaven begins, where no one is looking."

We began with the foundation, not just of stone, but of trust. I returned home to Australia to raise funds, sharing stories that weren't just mine, but God's. I told of babies lined in rows like unanswered prayers, and people weeping not from sadness, but from joy when the gospel reached their doorstep.

Some people gave. Some rolled their eyes. One woman handed me fifty dollars and whispered, "This is for the child no one sees."

Back in Kenya, we cleared the land with borrowed tools and blistered hands. Children came to watch. Some stayed to help. We planted trees, not for shade now, but for the shade to come. Faith, I've learned, is sometimes planting mango trees you may never live to taste.

One Sunday in Kitulu, Amina brought a moringa seedling wrapped in rags. “This will be your gate tree,” she said. “So, when the children arrive, they’ll know they’re entering something alive.”

Chapter: Twenty-Two:

The Year the Rains Withheld

In 2005, the sky forgot how to weep.

The rains, once predictable as breath, arrived in whispers and then vanished. Crops shrivelled. Dust rose where green should have been. Children's bellies swelled, not with food, but with worms and air and waiting.

We tried to prepare. We hired a man to install water tanks at schools, lifelines in dry places. But the man vanished with the money, and so did our hope for the harvest. We were tired, and the ground was more tired still.

Still, we rode, I on the back of a bicycle, my skirts trailing like banners of surrender and defiance all at once. School to school, village to village. Preaching, teaching, watching my team learn to deliver a simple gospel like bread broken in trembling hands.

And always, the funerals.

Some days, more than one. Tiny bodies wrapped in cloth. Babies gone too soon, some from malaria, others from the poisoned water drawn from lakes whose edges are now crusted with thirst. I remember one mother, her baby already in the ground behind the hut. She didn't speak. She didn't cry. I sat beside her and shared her silence. It was the only language that mattered.

And then word came: another baby had died in a village nearby. We gave money for the medicine to preserve the body. The next day, we returned with a coffin and food for grieving relatives. That, too, is ministry. Not just the laying on of hands, but the laying down of comfort for the sake of compassion.

The pastor I served with moved his family into the home I had rented. The drought pushed people closer, sometimes into our four walls. We shared meals, prayers, and rations of government maize distributed like pearls among the poor.

We preached Matthew 6:33 like it was oxygen.

Seek first the kingdom... and all these things shall be added.

But it's hard to convince people of heaven when their bellies are empty and every white face they've known has come with handouts. The chains of dependency are invisible but heavy.

So, I aimed at the children.

If they can know dignity while their hands are still open, maybe they'll grow into men and women who build their own altars, their own futures.

Six months passed. Then came an email from Prari, a girl in Ohio I'd met online. She said God had stirred her heart. She arrived bright-eyed and fearless, like a wild sunflower. Every day we walked. We shared Jesus. We watched the lame stand, fevers break, and sins crumple under the weight of grace.

Chapter Twenty-Three:

The Island and the Ashes

The boat to Mfangano Island bucked and swayed like a creature barely tamed. If I hadn't known Jesus, I might've clutched the edge until my knuckles turned white. But salvation has a way of changing what you fear.

Onboard were chickens in crates, sacks of cassava, women shielding infants from the sun, and bundles of belongings lashed to the roof. I sat next to an eight-year-old girl balancing a baby in her lap like it was both a burden and a blessing. The baby's breath was shallow, eyes heavy with fever.

"May I?" I asked softly.

She nodded.

The moment I took the child, something shifted. Her body arched, stiffened, still. No breath. No blink. Just stillness.

We circled her in prayer. I held her close and called heaven with a trembling voice while others interceded. Then suddenly, a breath. A gasp. Life.

The boat's motor coughed beneath us as if echoing her return. One of the crew told us this happened often, babies that were too sick to be taken by their parents were sent with older siblings in desperate hope for mercy at a clinic. No money. No options. Just a prayer hidden in the folds of a baby blanket.

On the island, most were Seventh-Day Adventists, God-fearing but unreached. We shared the gospel, and hearts opened like the sky before rain. I left with an ache to return.

Ghera

The land in Ghera rolled wild and overgrown, a legacy fractured by grief. A man had died, leaving three wives and more than thirty children. They lived scattered between thorn bushes and sorrow, kept afloat by a few goats and grit.

They belonged to Roho, a cult born from broken Catholic tradition, reverent but lost. We moved from hut to hut, offering not judgment, but truth. And truth made room for grace. Sixteen received Jesus. Hope lit candles in their eyes.

Inside one hut, we found a boy, shivering, drenched in sweat. Malaria had gripped him tight. We prayed, bathed his fevered skin, we gave him water. In minutes, he stood. The fever left like a shadow chased out by morning light.

In another, the smell hit us before the doorway did. Flies, silence, rot. My friend fled outside. I steadied my breath and stepped in.

Samuel.

Educated. Fluent. Wasting away on a bed of woven sorrow. His wife was in hospital. Three children waited outside, faces thin as whispers. We prayed, brought food, we visited him again and again. His wife came home, frail but alive. Then she died.

Samuel carried his grief to his mother's house. And there, somehow, his body began to mend.

They don't talk about HIV/AIDS. It lingers like smoke, present, choking, but never named. In a land where polygamy is common, disease weaves through families like a silent tide.

And then came goodbye.

Prari had been more than a companion, she was a laughter against the darkness. Her boyfriend arrived, and together we ministered until the day she left. I watched her plane rise from the earth like a thread being pulled from cloth.

And I was alone again.

Alone, but never abandoned.

Chapter Twenty-Four:

Dust and Departure

Samuel's funeral broke something in me. Not just because he died too soon, he did, but because of the way the earth closed over yet another father and left three small souls clinging to a grandmother with tired eyes and thin arms. I cried that day, openly, helplessly. Grief had become a familiar visitor in these villages, but this time, it sat down beside me.

Still, we kept returning, week after week, walking that dusty path with bibles in hand and hearts pressed full of hope. We taught them the Word. We watched it take root in some places, and bloom in others. And always, the vision burned brighter: to raise children in safe arms, in secure homes, where they'd learn dignity alongside Scripture and grow up to change the very soil that birthed them.

But vision doesn't shield you from danger.

After my friend left, cracks widened between the pastor and me. His intentions no longer aligned with mine. There were words unsaid, motives unspoken, but the unease was real. I knew I had to leave. In a place where too many men treat women as possessions, safety isn't guaranteed by calling or character.

So, I slipped away to Uganda with a kind-hearted pharmacist and his gentle wife and their two giggling girls. For a little while, I breathed differently, lighter. Their home was humble but filled with laughter and healing. When I returned to Kenya, God made a way for me to renew my visa. But Mbita no longer held the warmth it once had.

I tried to retrieve my things. The pastor resisted. I stayed at the YWAM base—those sacred walls giving me room to cry, to pray, to ask the Lord if He still wanted me here.

I curled up beneath the mosquito net, knees tucked to my chest, shame crowding out the stars beyond the window. And then... stillness. It wasn't comfort. It wasn't an answer. It was just Presence. And it held me the way I hadn't known I needed.

I had no money. No ticket. I was overstaying my visa and running out of time. But even in the tangle of borders and broken trust, God sent provision. A church pastor in Nairobi introduced me to a man in immigration, a quiet angel who helped renew my visa just in time.

My daughter bought my ticket. Grace in a phone call.

And just like that, I boarded the flight. Every mile home pulled me backward and forward, all at once.

Because even when we feel like we are empty, we are never abandoned.

Chapter: Twenty-Five:

Comfortable Is Scary

Coming home should have felt like a reward.

Instead, it felt like waking up mid-dream, sunlight too bright, walls too close, and the echo of laughter that wasn't mine. I stayed with my daughter, her partner, and my six-year-old grandson. Their hugs grounded me, and the scent of home-cooked meals filled something hollow in me. But still, I felt out of rhythm.

Australia was familiar but no longer home in the same way. The edges had shifted. Or maybe I had.

I received the pension soon after I returned, and though I didn't need to work, I wanted purpose. I bought an old red Toyota Corolla, faithful and sputtering and started driving for the local community. It gave me something to do. Something that looked like a contribution.

But my spirit... my spirit was caught between worlds.

I missed Africa. Not the poverty, not the funerals, but the hunger for God. The way faith crackled in the air and the gospel wasn't up for debate. In Mbita, I never had to persuade people that God existed, they *knew*. In Australia, I felt like a merchant selling water to those who thought they weren't thirsty.

"You people think you have nothing," I had once told my African brothers and sisters, "but when you have Jesus, you have everything."

It was the Westerners I worried for. So much comfort. So little satisfaction. Gratitude is buried beneath convenience. I saw people chase after distraction while their souls quietly starved.

The hardest part? Being comfortable myself.

I moved into a neat little unit in a retirement village, surrounded by ladies who called me "dear" and offered me biscuits wrapped in napkins. They meant well. They were kind. But I couldn't find my place. I was younger than most of them. Louder in spirit. Hungrier in purpose.

They were gentle, sweet, and kind. But I was too young to belong and too restless to stay.

Comfortable is scary. It lulls you out of vision. It asks you to trade fire for security.

I missed preaching. I missed gospel dust on my hem. I missed walking into huts and seeing hope ignite behind weary eyes. So, I prayed. And I searched.

One evening, I sat outside my little unit with a blanket draped around my knees and a mug of tea cooling in my hands. The streetlights blinked on without ceremony. No voice, no vision. Just the ache of being still. But somehow, I knew I wasn't abandoned. The Spirit was near, silent, steady as if waiting for me to speak first.

And then... a connection.

A young pastor from Manila. His message was brief, but it stirred me: *"Come. Work with us. The people of Smokey Mountain need hope."*

I'd heard of the place, the slums built around rubbish heaps, where children scavenged plastic and mothers boiled soup over tin fires. There, people knew the need. There, I knew I could serve again.

I said yes.

Three months. That's what I offered.

The gospel never needs more than a willing heart and a little bit of time.

Chapter: Twenty-Six:

Between Altars

It was strange how quickly the conveniences returned, hot water on demand, aisles of toothpaste choices, washing machines that hummed lullabies of normality. But my soul lagged behind.

I'd left the black dirt of Mbita, the cries of widows, the laughter of barefoot children singing praise with bellies half-empty, but hearts overflowing. And now I was here. In a country where wealth muted the hunger for heaven.

People asked how my "holiday" was.

I smiled politely.

In Africa, every day was urgent with meaning. Here, I stood still and felt invisible. My body rested, but my spirit paced like a prophet without a pulpit.

I walked the grocery aisles watching people argue over brands of butter. I wept once by the apples, shiny, spotless, piled high, remembering the bruised mangoes handed to me by children who hadn't eaten in days. I wanted to shake someone and say,

"Do you see? You have so much... and still, you want more."

Church was hard. There were programs and bulletins, coffee and friendly nods. But I missed the rawness. The dust of worship. The kind that comes from someone who knows Jesus is all they have left, and it's enough.

I prayed. I journaled. I asked God if I was finished. If maybe that season was over and I was now to live small, to be quiet.

But His silence was not absence—it was an invitation.

One morning, I wrote in shaky cursive:

"Lord, make me uncomfortable if that will move me closer to You again."

Chapter: Twenty-Seven:

Fire Rekindled

I thought I knew what to expect in Manila. I'd been before. But the Spirit has a way of breathing fresh life into old soil.

From the first moment we stood in front of the congregation, me, the pastor, and his wife, it felt like strings of heaven were weaving between us. There was no jostling, no formality. Our voices flowed into each other like a single breath. Souls responded. Bodies healed. The gospel fell like rain onto soil thirsty and wide open.

One day we ministered to forty senior citizens. Grey heads bowed, weathered hands lifted. We preached a simple gospel. All received. Deaf ears opened. Pain fled. And I was reminded again: *God is always faithful to His Word.*

We moved through the slums of Smokey Mountain, the air thick with heat and the sharp scent of refuse. Families lived in makeshift shacks built atop the rubbish. Children ran barefoot through narrow alleys, their laughter a strange defiance. As we prayed, hope crackled through the brokenness like fire finding dry kindling. Lives were changed, not just spiritually, but tangibly.

We launched a feeding program for undernourished children. With each cup of Reliv mixed with milk, their bodies began to heal. Worms expelled. Smiles returned. Eyes brightened.

The pastor's vision ran wide and deep. With support from an English donor, we sowed seeds of small businesses, microloans, vegetable stalls, and home enterprises. He began a little venture from his own home. I watched God do what only God can do: raise dignity from dust.

But soon, the heat became unbearable. Ministry slowed. The days lengthened with fasting and prayer. And then, as quietly as I had come, I felt the release.

My time was complete. And I returned to Australia again, grateful, expectant, still listening.

Malawi and Kenya

Two years later, the whisper returned.

I was introduced to a bishop from Malawi. We wrote. We prayed. And then I packed a suitcase.

As always, I didn't have the money. But I had faith and a plane date: October 30. A few days before departure, a friend rang out of the blue. "*When are you heading back to Africa?*" I told him. He said he had a gift for me.

A cheque arrived, just over \$2,000. Enough to buy my ticket. Enough to remind me: that *God does not fail those who walk by faith*.

Malawi was glorious in its simplicity. We travelled deep into the villages, places where the sky stretched wide and the soil bore stories of struggle and resilience. The people had never seen someone like me, not up close. Some of the children ran screaming as I approached.

Others ran grinning. Most just wanted to touch my skin, curious to see if it was real.

We preached. We prayed. We laughed. And the rice fields near the Mozambican border became sacred ground.

At the airport, the bishop and I embraced like a long-lost family. We spoke of future journeys and longer stays. My heart, once again, stretched across continents.

Chapter: Twenty-Eight:

The Woman with the Drum

It was a village hemmed in by rice paddies and acacia trees, near the border of Mozambique, a place where the road thinned to little more than a memory and the wind carried the smell of firewood and damp earth. We arrived just after dawn, our sandals slick with dew, the sky stretching wide and open like God's own tabernacle.

We were greeted by a circle of women, their skirts bright with batik patterns, their eyes shy but curious. Children peered from behind hut walls, and a dog padded through the dust like it was leading a parade of expectation.

We preached the gospel under a tree older than most of the village. No microphone. No stage. Just the Word and the wind.

One woman stood apart. She held a drum, not a fancy one, just a carved-out gourd stretched with goatskin, but she beat it with reverence, steady and low. Her name was Chikondi, which means "love" in Chichewa. She was the village's midwife, grandmother to nine, and known for walking miles to tend to the sick with a basket of herbs and whispered prayers.

When the time came to pray for healing, she didn't move. She kept drumming, the rhythm unchanged. I walked over gently and knelt beside her.

"What do you need from God?" I asked.

She didn't look at me right away. She just said, softly, "My legs no longer carry me through the night. I miss delivering babies. I miss dancing when the harvest comes."

We prayed together. Her skin was hot with inflammation; years of walking and weather had taken their toll. But as we prayed, her eyes closed, and tears streamed silently down her cheeks.

When we finished, she stood.

She let out a small, startled laugh and stomped her feet like someone testing a bridge before crossing. Then she lifted her drum and began

to dance in a slow, wide circle, each step louder, freer, braver. The other women joined in, and what began as a healing turned into a celebration.

By the time we left, Chikondi had tied her drum across her shoulder again.

“I will walk tonight,” she said, “even if it is just to dance under the stars.”

We reached the edge of Malawi in a rickety van that wheezed more than it roared. The road melted into a narrow dirt trail flanked by sugarcane and silence. Mozambique lay just beyond the horizon, invisible but felt as if the land itself shifted slightly beneath our feet, waiting.

The village had no name that I can recall, just red soil, a scattering of huts, and children who stared like they’d never seen anything like me.

And perhaps they hadn’t.

The first one to approach was a boy with a tyre rim tied to a stick, his chariot of fire. His belly was round, his smile rounder. He poked my hand and ran away squealing. Then others joined: a cluster of barefoot shadows with wide eyes and sharper instincts.

One girl reached for my hair, fascinated. Another traced the veins on my hand like they were rivers. When I smiled, they erupted into giggles, as if I’d just performed a miracle.

I knelt and clapped a rhythm. They copied me, awkward at first, then eager. The circle grew until it was ten, then fifteen, then twenty children, all clapping, stomping, humming melodies I didn’t know but gladly followed.

We didn’t speak the same language. But laughter has no accent.

After we prayed and shared the gospel, the older ones helped translate the story of Jesus’ healing touch. A little boy barely six tugged at my sleeve and said something in a whisper. One of the older girls translated: “He says if Jesus is real, can He fix his brother’s legs?”

The brother was hidden in the shadows of a nearby hut, thin and quiet, his legs twisted beneath him. We walked there together. I knelt again this time not to play but to pray.

We laid hands. We asked. We wept.

There was no flash of light, no instant healing, but there was a presence, thick, holy, unmistakable. When we left, the brother smiled at me. It was enough. Sometimes, faith plants its roots before the miracle shows its face.

As we drove away, the children ran after the van waving. Some called out “Mzungu!” Others just sang.

Their voices followed me like a blessing. Or a promise.

Chapter: Twenty- Nine:

Between Kingdoms

As the plane dipped over the land I had once called home, a hush came over me. It wasn't the fear of what might come. It was gratitude. That is a life stitched together by obedience; I'd been allowed to walk through so many doors. And behind each one, I had introduced someone to the One who changed everything for me.

Jesus.

The streets of Nairobi throbbed with election noise, horns, music, and voices heavy with tribal passion. There was talk of change. Of Riella Odinga, the Luo leader many believed would rise. There was hope, but it was fragile.

A friend met me at the airport, and we journeyed to Kitale. There I found the Sylvia Rehema School, named after me, they said. My name was etched into the dreams of orphans who carried more resilience than most armies. It was humbling. And healing.

At Mike's home, twenty children shared space, laughter, and borrowed futures. I helped where I could, with school uniforms, prayers, and warm words spoken in cool rooms. We held a seminar, and hearts opened like windows in a breeze. Many were saved. Many healed.

From Kitale to Kisumu, and on to Homa Bay with Ben. He had a car, this was an unfamiliar luxury. It felt strange not to ride in the dust, but I gave thanks all the same. We visited Got Kabok, a school forgotten by government lines and invisible maps. The children were ghost-like in hunger, clothed in rags, eyes dull.

The classroom was silent.

Too silent.

So, we cried out. Loud. Honest. Unpolished.

One week later, we returned with food and the gospel. Over a hundred souls met Christ in a clearing between maize and sorrow. We fed their bellies and their faith. Months later, I would hear the news: the school

had risen from forgotten to flourishing. God had remembered what man had not.

In Homa Bay, we went from hospital bed to hospital bed. Healing came like the wind, sometimes soft, sometimes sudden. The gospel poured out like oil over wounds both visible and hidden.

I returned to Mbita, too.

The place held old wounds. But grace has no expiration date. I met with the pastor I once trusted. We shared words, forgiveness, silence. Not everything needed to be said. Some things simply needed to be unburdened.

Christmas 2007 – Kenya

We gathered beneath the warm Lambwe sky, where chickens clucked, fires crackled, and the Spirit of Christmas moved quietly through the humble homestead. Ben's family welcomed me like one long lost, and as I watched each soul contribute, cooking, sweeping, praying, and laughing. I saw the Body of Christ come to life. Not in grand displays, but in pots stirred and hands joined. Unity, simple and unshakable.

By the 27th, election day stirred the land like a restless wind. Hushed voices spoke names heavy with hope and history—Raila Odinga, President Kibaki. Fear hung in the air as violence shadowed the town centres, yet we journeyed to Mbita so votes could be cast. I rode pillion on a motorbike, the dust from the road mingling with my breath prayers. By nightfall, I was hidden away in safety, the sounds of unrest echoing in my chest.

“Shall I go home?” I asked Him in the stillness.

“Where is home?” He answered, not unkindly.

And my soul, trembling but sure, remembered: home is the will of God. Wherever that leads, I am held.

January – A Quiet Hope Begins to Sing

By the 12th, we were safely nestled in a rented home in Homa Bay. The air was calmer, though the markets whispered of rising prices. Still, provision arrived like manna, enough to feed the children, clothe them in uniforms, and offer comfort to widows. Someone had slipped grace into my bank account. A quiet miracle, unasked for, but deeply needed.

On the 16th, the city burst into celebration. Odinga had stepped into Parliament as opposition leader. Though Kibaki held the presidency, there was a shift, light flickering through the cracks. That very day, we returned to the hospital to pray for the sick. Twenty souls were saved. The next Tuesday, fifteen more. Thunder cracked the sky, rain danced down, and victory roared over the rooftops.

On the 24th, a trembling breakthrough, Kibaki and Odinga met with Kofi Annan. I cradled the hope in my heart that justice would speak louder than fear, that peace would rise like dawn over Kenya.

Returning—But Not the Same

My journey home led me through Johannesburg, where a cancelled flight birthed unexpected grace. Qantas, unwitting angels, sheltered us in luxury and laughter. The Southern Sun glowed with warmth, and I rested, soul full and eyes wide with memory. Kenya and Malawi had carved their stories into me. I returned to Australia not only with luggage but with a heart etched in red soil, thunderstorm prayers, and laughter shared beneath tin roofs.

Chapter: Thirty:

Shauri Yako

I hadn't planned to return. Malawi had left me weary, grateful, yes, but stretched thin by need that never slept and hearts too worn to hope. I had said, *no more*. But God had not finished writing the pages.

And then I met Joshua.

It began with emails. Honest ones. No fluff, no flattery. Just truth. He was a father of six, living in Homa Bay, working quietly and faithfully, and holding leaders accountable with NGO funds. He understood stewardship, of money, but more so, of people. We shared our stories. We exchanged visions.

And I felt it, the familiar stirring.

So, before I returned to Kenya, I joined a mission trip to the Philippines. Dumaguete dazzled with colour and motors and ministry. Preaching in the barangays, staying with a local pastor's family, and following up with new believers grounded me again. The gospel is the same in every language, clear, weighty, tender. I left refreshed, and ready.

When I stepped out of the airport in Nairobi that November, Joshua was waiting.

We talked to Homa Bay about family, pain, resilience, and the promise of *Heaven on Earth*. The vision still lived, not in blueprints, but in hearts open to be poured out again.

We arrived in Shauri Yako, a slum wrapped in tin and dust, and pulsing with spiritual hunger. That first week, we went door to door with a simple message: *Jesus sees you. Jesus loves you. Jesus saves*. A video camera captured faces, some curious, some tearful, as we prayed.

One hundred and fifty responded that day.

The power of God was not loud. It was faithful. Pain fled. Fevers lifted. The invisible became seen.

One woman was lying on the bare ground in a dark tin shed. Her eyes, when we prayed, glistened with a kind of clarity that only comes when death is near and hope is still possible. We brought food. Then we bought a bed. Then we brought people to sit with her. She died not long after. But not alone. Not untouched. Not unloved.

Her name is written somewhere in eternity now.

Joshua told me about his village, Buche, and I was eager to go. Not as a stranger this time, but as someone with sleeves rolled up and vision intact.

Chapter: Thirty-One:

The Rain Came Down

When we arrived in Buche, the land groaned with drought. Cracks lined the earth like unanswered prayers, and even the sky looked weary. But clouds had begun to gather. And with them came hope.

The fields stirred early beneath the morning sun, a dust-honeyed quiet broken only by the rhythmic bellow of men's voices. Two, sometimes four bulls were yoked together, muscled, obedient creatures responding with remarkable trust to their own names as they strained forward through furrows of ancient soil. Each animal bore a name, not merely for distinction but as if to honour their place in the sacred partnership of earth and man. Their obedience was coaxed not by harsh commands, but by a chorus of deep calls and lilting work songs, sung like prayers over the dust.

Our first welcome came from two women, Joshua's mother and aunt, they were robed in garments that bore the symbolic weight of their devotion. Their presence told the story before words did: adherents of Legio Maria, a sect birthed in 1963 by two Roman Catholics, one of whom, Simeo Ondeto, claimed to be the incarnation of Christ. Though he had passed away in 1992, his image remained alive in the huts we visited, nestled into shrines like sacred sentinels. Many bowed before these icons with prayers and offerings, a quiet surrender cloaked in reverence and fear.

There was sorrow in what we saw, not in their sincerity, but in the tightening grip of a belief system that rejected healing both old and new medicines, whether born of Western science or ancestral tradition were spurned. So too were music, tobacco, and dancing, joyful expressions hushed beneath a weight of doctrine. I saw the fear in their eyes, the kind that binds hearts to ritual while starving the soul of freedom.

It struck me that while some names are called across fields to draw creatures into purpose, others are whispered in the hope of calling people back into freedom. And perhaps, even here, where the soil is

thick with both faith and misunderstanding, the Spirit still walks, softly, steadily, calling each one by name.

The village was humble, mud huts with no electricity, water drawn from hand pumps, and paraffin lamps burning dimly beside cooking fires. The women carried their world on their heads.

We visited homes, one after another. Faces softened. Eyes widened. So many had never heard the gospel before, and yet they opened their hearts with surprising ease. The next day, the rains came, heavy and deliberate.

And since we could not go out, they came to us.

Ten or more each day, hungry for the Word. Some walked for miles through thickening mud just to hear more.

One afternoon, a group of twenty-five women arrived. Only four knew Jesus. By evening, they all did, singing, clapping, tears mixing with raindrops on their cheeks.

By the time our six days had passed, over one hundred had received salvation.

I left Buche in borrowed gumboots and a grateful heart. I'd come to see Joshua's roots. I left having seen part of heaven.

There is something in this man I deeply admire. His walk is steady. His faith is unwavering, his kindness precise. He and his wife opened not just their home but their hearts, and I knew I had met someone with a rare mantle of integrity.

When the time came to leave, I didn't want to say goodbye. But obedience often wears the face of departure.

We drove to Kisumu, and I boarded a flight to Nairobi, my eyes full of memories and my spirit full of rain.

Journal Entry: Between Departures

The air in Nairobi feels heavier tonight—not with humidity, but with the weight of all I carry home. I've folded my clothes. My bags are zipped. My hands are clean, but my heart is still stained with black soil and joy and tears from Buche Village.

There's always a pause before re-entry. A holy hush. I'm sitting by the window with the streetlight flickering outside and the distant hum of traffic beneath it. Children sleep in houses I'll never visit. And Jesus sits here with me. Quiet. Close.

Lord, I feel like a guest in both places now, Africa and Australia. One too worn, one too sleek. My body is returning home, but where is *my* home?

You keep asking me to go.

You keep teaching me to stay.

You keep showing me that obedience looks like movement even when I'd rather nest.

Tonight, I don't want to plan. I don't want to project. I just want to say thank You.

Thank You for the bulls that come when called.

For mothers who remove their headdresses in surrender.

For rain falling just as the gospel takes root.

For borrowed gumboots.

And for the way You made my feet fit them.

You did it again, Lord.

You found me somewhere in the middle of someone else's miracle.

I'll walk the airport corridors tomorrow with these stories inside me. I won't explain them. I'll carry them like lamp oil.

And if I ever forget, remind me of the sound of the women in Buche singing salvation into the rain. Let that be my compass.

Chapter: Thirty-Two:

Bringing Heaven to Earth

Home was never meant to hold me forever.

After returning to Australia, I stayed with my daughter and her ten-year-old son out in the country. There was joy in the small things, in helping with schoolwork, watching movies, and walking the dog through paddocks painted in golden light. I was back in rhythm with my family. I had the use of a car some days, and that small freedom grounded me.

Eventually, I found a unit in the retirement village again. A bed, some furniture. A sense of ease.

But comfort can be a strange kind of silence, too much silence can suffocate a calling.

One morning as I prayed, clarity returned, not as a thunderclap, but as a gentle knowing: *You're not finished yet*. I couldn't bury the passion God had put in me. Africa was still beating in my chest.

So, I began again, giving things away, packing bags not just with clothes, but with faith.

The vision hadn't faded. *Heaven on Earth*. A community for widows and orphans in Buche, a church, a school, a place of hope built not with concrete, but with compassion.

A friend felt stirred to join me on this journey. As we prayed, the pieces aligned. In April 2010, we left together.

Joshua met us at the airport in Nairobi. Familiar, steady, joyful. I knew this year ahead would be one of deepening. Of letting God refine the dream He'd begun.

We stayed a night in Nairobi, then took the long journey by minibus through the Rift Valley. My friend was enchanted by the landscape, the wide skies, the dust, the layered colours of a land so richly alive.

When we reached Buche, the welcome was full and wide: singing children, neighbours bearing smiles and hands ready to carry our

luggage. A man named Ben had even built a pit latrine for me—a gesture of kindness wrapped in corrugated tin and dignity.

Lunch was prepared with chickens offered up in celebration. The house was filled with laughter and conversation in the Luo language. In the evenings, the village gathered to sing and hear the Word, joy spilling out into the night air. I remembered again why I loved this place.

There was no rush here. No noise or unnecessary things. Only peace. And the holy simplicity of cows, chickens, and people who still believed that God walks among us.

We spent a week in the village before my friend returned to Australia.

The house creaked in its bones. Outside, the night wrapped itself around the village like a prayer shawl. I sat by the open window, listening to the distant bray of goats and the hush between stars. And in that quiet, I sensed it again—the whisper that had followed me for years. Angelique. Not a name I'd chosen. But one I was still growing into.

I stayed.

Because Heaven on Earth was not just a dream anymore.

It had a name. And it was becoming.

Chapter: Thirty-Three:

A Place to Call Heaven

We kept walking. House to house. Dusty road after dusty road. Preaching the gospel, sharing water, laying hands on fevered children, and watching heaven meet earth one prayer at a time.

Then we saw him.

A small boy, maybe ten. A bundle of sticks wobbling on his head, charcoal dust smudging his cheeks. He didn't speak English. But pain speaks every language.

His parents and siblings were gone. He was alone. Surviving by making charcoal to trade for food. He listened quietly to the gospel. Said nothing. Then walked away into the dusk.

The next morning, God whispered, *Go and get him.*

I knew what that meant. This wasn't just ministry anymore. This was motherhood.

We sent for him. He came. Quiet, unsure. I asked his name. "Okello," he said.

"Can I call you Joshua?"

He nodded.

He stayed for a night. Played with the children. And then he vanished again.

But the next morning, he returned, carrying a bundle of charcoal as an offering.

He was home.

Joshua went to live in Homa Bay Town with Joshua and his family in Homa Bay. I believe that wherever he is now he will continue to carry light instead of charcoal.

Heaven on Earth Begins

We had been praying for land, somewhere to plant a dream. Then a neighbour offered to sell a large plot: sandy, productive, full of rocks

and potential. A slab of granite crowned the rise, overlooking the land like it was already ordained.

We didn't have the money. But faith doesn't check bank balances.

Within days, funds arrived. Enough for the deposit. A few weeks later, the land was ours.

We would build on the rock, literally.

The two-story home would stand there overlooking what would become the *Heaven on Earth* community.

Then came the nursery school.

A church offered their hut as a makeshift classroom. We gathered teachers. Advertised in the villages. Over sixty children came, aged three to seven. Most had never been inside a classroom.

We went to Homa Bay to shop for little exercise books, stubby pencils, blackboards, posters, and porridge ingredients. We hired a cook, bought giant cooking pots, and laid everything out with joy.

Day one felt like resurrection.

Parents came too, over fifty. We shared the gospel, and many responded. Then we asked how they'd like to help. Some offered firewood. Others said they'd help clear the land. And just like that, the church began.

We measured it out beneath the sun. Marked the boundaries with stones. And stood in the dust as hope took shape.

This wasn't just my vision anymore.

It was *ours*.

Chapter: Thirty-Four:

The Sound of Small Feet

The mornings came early.

Long before the sun kissed the fields, the sound of fire crackling in the outdoor kitchen signalled the start of another day at the nursery school. A woman named Ruth, wrapped in a bright kitenge and humming an old Luo hymn, stirred porridge in a pot big enough to feed a village. And in a way, it did.

The first children arrived with the light, barefoot, bright-eyed, some still wiping sleep from their lashes. Their school uniforms hung loosely on their small frames, some shirts too large, others a little too short. But it didn't matter. They wore them with pride. It was the first uniform many of them had ever owned.

We began each day with a simple prayer in the open air. Then came songs, joyous, off-key, unstoppable. The older children taught the younger ones the motions. They danced without rhythm and care, arms flailing joyfully under the sky.

In the classroom hut, the blackboard leaned against the wall like it wasn't quite ready for the weight of dreams. Teachers used sticks to point at letters painted on cardboard. "A is for antelope," one said, as a curious goat wandered past the doorway, bleating its lesson.

Some of the children were quiet, especially the littlest ones. One girl, Ayen, barely spoke for a week. She sat near the back and held her porridge cup like it was a treasure. Then one day, unprompted, she sang. Just a single note, flat and soft but it cracked the whole room open like morning light through thatched walls. From then on, she sang every day.

I stood at the edge of the schoolyard, barefoot children chasing joy through the dust, and I realized: I was no longer just Sylvia. I was Angelique now. Not in name only, but in presence. In the way I knelt to tie a shoelace. In the way my voice no longer trembled when I prayed. In the way I believed, fiercely and without apology, that heaven *could* touch earth, even here.

Challenges came, of course.

Some parents stopped sending their children when planting season arrived, they needed hands for the fields. A few parents worried that education might pull their children away from tradition or labour. Others simply couldn't afford the uniforms.

We responded with patience and open hands. We asked what they needed. We offered uniforms when we could. We listened.

As the school settled into its rhythm, so did the church. We gathered each Sunday under the trees, benches fashioned from logs and planks, some parents sitting cross-legged in the dirt. The Word was preached. Testimonies were shared. Children played tag around the edges of the gathering while goats bleated in agreement with every "Amen."

There was one elderly woman named Mama Esther who came each week with a cane and a thousand-watt smile. She couldn't read. But she recited entire psalms by heart and always brought extra cassava to share with whoever was hungry.

Together, we were building something sacred.

Not just a school.

Not just a church.

A community where heaven touched earth in chalk-stained fingers, song-filled mornings, and the patient work of people learning slowly, steadily to hope again.

Chapter: Thirty-Five:

Stones and Songs

The day we met Felix; he was little more than skin and strength. Thin arms carry a bigger burden than any child ever should. He had malaria. His eyes were clouded with fever, his body underfed, and his spirit thin from years of surviving on silence.

When we visited the home where he was staying, it became clear, he wasn't safe. Not in heart, nor body.

We brought him home.

Felix didn't speak much at first, but he watched everything. Within a week, he was singing with the other children, softly at first, then freely. Now he's growing into a young man who loves God deeply, who tends animals with tenderness, and who prays with the kind of hope that shifts the air in a room.

We moved into Joshua's house not long after, and the spare rooms filled with song and sandals and second chances. One by one, more children came. Orphans. Forgotten ones. Survivors. They came carrying trauma and left carrying tambourines.

Each evening, the children went home singing. Songs about Jesus. About love. About joy. And as they sang, something began to shift in the soil of Buche.

Parents listened. Neighbours softened. People came to church curious and stayed to be changed.

Now, *Heaven on Earth Ministries* stands on its own foundation, stone by stone, song by song. We have our church building, woven into the heart of the village. We gather there regularly. Worship lifts the roof. The Holy Spirit moves in whispers and waves.

There are elders now. Deacons. Servants who once came with questions but now stand with conviction. They are steady. Faithful. Like the land itself weather-worn but deeply rooted.

This isn't just a mission anymore. It's a family. A movement. A home.

There are mornings when I rise before the sun, when the village is still folded in sleep and the only sound is the low murmur of goats rustling under shelter. I sit on the step outside our house with a shawl wrapped around my shoulders and a warm cup of chai nestled in my hands.

And I look out across what God has built.

The church, simple but strong, leans into the sunrise. The school, still roofed with hope and corrugated tin, waits for the chorus of little feet. A rooster crows like he has something important to say. And there, scattered across the land, are the changed lives: Joshua, once a boy lost in dust; Felix, who now sings his prayers; the elders, rising early for prayer; the mothers who used to come for help and now come to help.

This isn't the kind of kingdom you find on a map.

But it's one God draws with tears and worship and the kind of trust that says yes before the provision arrives.

I used to wonder if I would ever belong again. Now I don't ask that question. Belonging isn't always about where your passport says you live, it's about where your heart kneels.

Sometimes I miss the ease of the West. Hot showers. Fast roads. Silence is not filled with roosters.

But I don't miss the hollowness.

Here, even the hard days hum with purpose.

Thank You, Lord, for this life. For this land. For the little church on the rock and the children who laugh their way into tomorrow. You have taken my yes and turned it into something far more beautiful than I could ever have imagined.

Chapter: Thirty-Six:

A Day in Heaven

Before the porridge pots clanged and the songs began, I stole a few minutes by the doorway. The sunrise was still rubbing its eyes. I didn't pray out loud. I didn't need to. The Spirit was already there, brushing the horizon with gold, reminding me that even joy has a quiet side.

The morning begins with sound. Twenty-two children rising with the dawn, gathering uniforms, washing sleepy faces, and preparing for school under a sky still blushing with sunrise. Their voices bubble like birdsong through the house, calling me gently into the day.

But before anything else: my time with God.

I sit with Scripture and surrender, asking, not for ease, but for alignment. *Lord, order this day. Let every step be Spirit-led. Let every word carry life.*

Breakfast is simple: bread, margarine, jam, and tea. Sometimes pancakes, if it's a special day. Today, simplicity is enough.

The basin in the bathroom holds cold water for washing. I splash my face and dress. Then I'm off to town, to the market, to find slippers for the children. They're made from old tyres. Sturdy. Practical. A small grace for growing feet.

As I step outside, children shout, "Muzungu, how are you?" They run up to me with curiosity sparkling in their eyes, reaching to touch my hair, giggling in the language of joy.

Along the road, I find my taxi, a boda boda. Most days, this is how I travel: riding through dust and laughter on the back of a motorbike. Once, this place was heavy with crime. Now these bikes are the chariots of restored livelihoods.

The rider asks no questions. But I do.

"Do you know Jesus?"

"No," he says. "Not really into religion."

“Well,” I reply with a smile, “neither am I.”

We talk. We ride. I feel the Spirit working. When we stop, I ask for five more minutes. I pull out my picture tract. He reads it slowly. Then he bows his head, receives Jesus, and smiles like someone remembering light. I take his number and promise a follow-up.

This is not unusual. This is the rhythm of Homa Bay.

At the market, I meet Conte, faithful, steady, Spirit-filled. He helps me barter with the men making slippers. Eight of them were curious and welcoming. We offer tracts and share the gospel. One by one, they give their lives to Christ. Their faces soften. Their shoulders relax. A sense of peace descends like mist.

We walk as the slippers are made. Stop at the fruit stall. Share again. Three more salvations over bowls of pineapple and pawpaw. Each soul is like a seed planted with sweetness.

Later, I spoke with a herbalist’s assistant. He tells me of pain, of a wife who left, a child he raised alone. I pray, hand resting over his heart. The Spirit meets us. He exhales, weeps, and says yes to Jesus.

We return to the slipper-makers. More men have gathered. And again, the gospel rings out, now in Luo song, in quiet yeses. Another four join the Kingdom, their hearts tugging toward the light.

By the time we leave, I’m riding home with plastic bags full of slippers and a heart fuller still. One of the new boda boda drivers receives salvation at the gate. The other promises to disciple him.

Lunch is waiting, ugali, eggs with tomato and onion, sukuma wiki. Simple food shared with a grateful heart.

And as I sit with my plate in hand, the words come softly:

This is what it means to bring heaven to earth.

That night, as the stars blinked open over Homa Bay, I stood at the window and let the silence wrap around me. The woman who once cried behind rationed curtains had become someone who walked through the mud with fire in her bones. Angelique was no longer a someday name. She was who I had become. She was how I loved. How I listened. How I stayed.

Chapter: Thirty-Seven:

The City of God

We renamed the streets.

Not officially, no maps were updated, and no signs were erected. But from our church building to the shores of Lake Victoria, we claimed the territory: *The City of God*.

This was once the worst part of Homa Bay, infamous for its thieves, its changa (home brew) dens, and its stories whispered with fear. But now? God was writing a new name over the dust. Families were being restored. Alcoholics saved. Businesses are born where brokenness once ruled.

This afternoon, Conte and I joined our team. We visited homes, prayed, and preached the gospel door to door, not with fanfare, but with faith.

Michael came with us. I met him eight years ago when he was blind and dying, drowning in alcohol. That day, he gave his life to Jesus. His sight returned partially. His soul fully.

Today, he's a husband, a father of three, a preacher, and a barber. He shaves hair by touch and preaches by the Spirit.

Moses, our Homa Bay pastor, also joined us. Steady and full of compassion, he and his wife care for their children and many orphans besides. Their home is a lighthouse in this resurrected place.

At one stop, a woman burdened by an unbelieving husband shared her tears. We listened. We prayed. And her neighbours, quiet, and curious, opened their hearts to the gospel and prayed with us too.

Later, a man approached us holding a marijuana joint like a confession. "I don't want this anymore," he said. His story spilled out, prison, confusion, pain. He'd been reading both the Bible and the Koran, desperate for peace. We prayed. Promised to come again. And days later, he stood smiling and transformed, now a regular at Pastor Moses' house of hope.

An old man, frail and alone, gave his life to Jesus. We returned to find him walking, smiling. Another man staggered out of a changa den, drunk and disoriented. We laid hands. He trembled. Then wept. The Spirit did what no sermon could.

Back at Moses' home, we gathered to pray. There was nothing glamorous about the day, only the glory of seeing lives restored from the inside out.

This is *Heaven on Earth*. Not the building. Not the paperwork. The moments when chains fall, one soul at a time.

Epilogue: A Dream That Breathes

I'm in Australia now. An eighty-year-old lady wondering if I will ever be allowed to go back to Kenya. God reminded me that Moses was 80 when he began his ministry. I think God hasn't finished with me yet, I spend my days writing, praying and encouraging people through the internet. My children are busy with their own lives, and here I am, half in this world, half leaning always toward Kenya.

The dream hasn't dimmed. *Heaven on Earth Ministries* is fifteen years strong, registered in Kenya, with churches spanning remote villages to the coast of Mombasa, and even reaching into Uganda.

And it is not finished.

I will return. I must.

This calling isn't a season. It's a seed God planted long ago, and I've watched it bloom in brown soil, over charcoal fires, between children's songs and mother's tears.

I used to think Angelique was a destination. A calling I'd one day arrive at, complete and whole. But now I know, she was always on the journey. The thread in every yes. The quiet voice in every wilderness. And this story... it isn't her ending. It's the blueprint she leaves behind.

So, I ask you—yes, *you*, holding this book in your hands, perhaps with tears still fresh or wonder still ringing in your chest:

What are the gifts God has placed in your heart?

Not the ones you perform for praise, but the quiet strengths, the unnoticed kindness, the things that bring life to others in ways only *you* can. Perhaps it's healing words. Or holy hospitality. Or a boldness that's waiting to be spoken.

Are there dreams in you lying dormant?

The kind you buried under practicality, perfectionism, or pain? Dreams you once whispered late at night, when you still believed that God might just use ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

Are there abilities He's entrusted to you, buried beneath distraction, discouragement, or delay?

Maybe you've been waiting for permission. Or for healing. Or for someone to say, "It's not too late." Consider this your confirmation: the gifts are still there. And they're still holy.

Hold onto them.

Dust them off. Cup your hands around them like coals. Blow gently. Let the embers glow again. Let God breathe.

And may He use your 'yes', simple, trembling, wholehearted, to bring heaven just a little closer to earth.

Because heaven isn't only found in distant skies or perfect places. It's built-in kitchens and clinics, in refugee camps and

schoolyards, in unexpected friendships and quiet obedience.
It's found wherever love chooses to stay.

Your story isn't over. It might just be the beginning.

Meet the Author

Dear reader,

Thank you, from the depths of my heart, for walking this journey through *Angelique* with me. I pray these pages stirred something holy within you, hope, courage, or the invitation to say your own quiet yes.

If the story blessed you, I'd be grateful if you left a review on Amazon or shared it with friends. As a small thank-you, I'd love to gift you a free Kindle copy. Just send me a note.

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Let's stay connected and keep praising forward.

With gratitude and love,

Sylvia

"A glimpse into everyday grace—where Heaven on Earth begins with hands held, hearts open, and joy that doesn't wait for perfect."

