



*a*  
*White*  
*amongst the*  
*Blacks*

S H E F A L I K U M A R





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# Chapter I

## The Seashore



It was 4.30 a.m., the beginning of twilight in Faithosia, on January 4, 1814.

Joshua Freeman was getting ready to go to the dockyard to collect a gift that would be delivered to him by an official secretary of the king's palace, Patrick D'Souza, from Verisimilia.

When Joshua reached the destination, the ship of the Verisimilian government had just arrived. Soon the agent got down from it. There were a few other officers in the ship assisting him, but the agent preferred to meet Joshua alone.

Patrick was personal assistant of Prince Daniel of Verisimilia, who was the son of King Thomas White. He was a short, fair-skinned man, dressed in an official blue tailcoat with matching waistcoat and breeches, white lace cuffs, and a jabot, silk stockings, buckled shoes, a cocked hat, white gloves and a sword. Apart from being calm and kind in nature, he was as faithful and loyal to the prince as any man could ever be to his master. The prince sometimes called him his 'right hand', for he always supported the prince in every manner he could. Being a religious man, he always treated everyone equally. He was not racist and was against the king's policies of racism. He was also a true patriot, who could even sacrifice his life for the sake of Verisimilia.

“You’re on time, Mr. D’Souza, as expected,” said Joshua to the official secretary of the king’s palace.

“I cannot afford to be late. After all, this is a precious gift! The prince says it is his piece of heart that needs to be carefully delivered to his daughter’s place over here,” answered the agent, smiling. He then handed over the gift to Joshua.

“Oh, this gift seems to be a letter box, I guess?” enquired Joshua, trying to touch and press the gift box to know its contents.

“Oh, yes! Mr. Joshua, this time only letters wrapped in this box, personally written by the prince, and he insists they must be read by his daughter only. So, I request you to hand this over to her and allow only her to read it,” said Patrick in an appealing tone.

“Well, now, I hope you’re done,” Joshua said casually, diverting attention from the topic.

“Look Mr. Joshua! These letters are of utmost importance and must be read by Gloria today itself, as it is her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. So, make sure the box reaches her safely,” the agent said earnestly, “By the way, I hope the princess liked the earlier gifts. She must be excitedly waiting for her gift this time, isn’t she, Mr. Joshua?” continued the agent earnestly.

Joshua remained silent for some time, trying to divert the topic again.

“Oh yeah, she loved those gifts,” he said, in a cold and disregarding tone. “And yes Mr. Patrick, I’ll take care to ensure the letters reach only her and are read only by her. Now sir, you may leave.”

“Convey my birthday wishes to Princess Gloria,” said Patrick before departing.

“Sure, Mr. Patrick, I will,” Joshua replied.

Soon after the agent left, Joshua looked keenly at the box, shaking it up and down.

“Oh, it’s so heavy!” he said to himself. “I guess, the prince has sent his whole autobiography to Gloria. Anyway, who cares!” He smiled sarcastically and proceeded towards his home.

On reaching home, Joshua immediately went to the storeroom near the dining room and placed the letter box inside an old wooden cupboard. The cupboard was filled with all the gifts sent by the prince till date. Joshua looked at them for a while and then closed the cupboard and locked it. He came to his room and kept the keys in his cupboard.

His wife, Margarete, was observing all this.

“How long will you be able to conceal this from Gloria?” she asked him.

“As long as I am alive,” he answered angrily.

“And what good do you think we are doing by hiding this from her?”

“I don’t know, but as long as I feel it is right, I’m going to keep doing it,” said Joshua, helping himself to a glass of water in the kitchen.

Margarete was overwrought hearing this, yet she wanted to express what she was feeling at that moment. So, after an uneasy interval of silence, she finally spoke.

“This is not right, Joshua. I feel we should no longer keep all this away from her. We should hand over these things to Gloria, at least the letters. It is her right to know. God will not forgive us for separating a daughter from her father,” she said in a tone of deep concern.

“Margarete! Margarete!” Joshua tried to stop Margarete from saying anything further.

“No, Joshua, it’s very inconsiderate of you. And what do you think will be the end to all this? Do you have the slightest idea what will happen if she comes to know about all this? Do you think we will then ever be able to hold our heads up before her? It makes my blood run cold even thinking of it.”

Joshua came to her slowly, took her hand in his own, and looked at her sorrowfully. He then said in a serious tone, “Margarete, listen to me, please. Your feelings are all right dear, but I don’t think we are doing anything wrong. Do you remember what happened to our daughter, Mitchel? Do you remember those difficult times, how we managed to come here to Faithosia, safely from Verisimilia? I don’t know if you really remember that struggling period, because if you remembered, you would not have asked me this question, again. I cannot forget a single second that we spent in Verisimilia waiting for our daughter to be set free. And frankly speaking, I don’t want Gloria to suffer what Mitchel had to. I’d promised Mitchel to look after Gloria and keep her away from all the miseries that Mitchel had suffered. So, no matter what, I’m not going to let her know that her father is alive because I cannot lose her anymore or break my promise to Mitchel, at any cost.”

He continued after a pause, “Margarete, we’ve already faced the worst obstacles in our past. Do you want to repeat all that had happened during those dark chapters of our lives?”

After listening to everything, Margarete went into deep thinking. She sat on a chair and did not speak for a few minutes. Her past came flashing in her mind; it was as if it was all happening right then. The horrors of the past had always haunted her. After all, the past had been an age of long sorrows and desperation. Now, when everything was normal,

they certainly did not want to take a risk and lose their happiness and bring grief upon their lives again.

“No, no, Joshua, I don’t want to lose Gloria, she is the only reason we are alive. I don’t want to repeat the horrors of the past. All I want is happiness and freedom. I hope one day Gloria will forgive us if she ever comes to know of all this,” Margarete said sorrowfully.

“Margarete, I believe Gloria is happy in this world of ours. She never complained of anything. So, let’s not open what was closed long time ago. Soon I’ll arrange to dispose of all the gifts and letters. So, there will not be any problem in the future. And I know one thing for sure—Gloria will never mistake us. So, let’s celebrate our angel’s day today, as she turns 18,” said Joshua, joyfully.

With high positive hopes in their heart, Margarete and Joshua wiped their tears and changed the topic of discussion. Then they went to wake up their angel granddaughter Gloria, who was sleeping in her room.

Long time ago, Joshua and Margarete had lost their daughter, who had died after giving birth to their granddaughter. They thought the prince was responsible for the death of their only daughter because of the distress and pain she had suffered due to him and his family.

Though Joshua was reluctant to remember his past, every year, on Gloria’s birthday, he was filled with past memories whenever he received the prince’s gifts. But he had no option than to receive the gifts because of the word he had given to the prince 18 years ago. He had promised to the prince that he would give his gifts to Gloria on her birthdays. The prince too had promised to Joshua that he would not try to meet Gloria till she decided to meet her father. In fact, the prince

had not been allowed to see his daughter even when she was born. Joshua wanted the prince to go through the pain he had gone through, when he lost his daughter forever.

Many times, Joshua thought of disposing of the gifts but he was scared that if the people of Faithosia caught him, they would question him. Meanwhile, the prince was under the impression that his daughter did not want to meet him, because till date she had not responded to any of his gifts. He thought that Gloria was angry with him and had not forgiven him. But he didn't want to lose hope. He believed, deep down in his heart, that one day Gloria would understand him and return to him. He hoped she would understand his reasons for what had been done in the past. He thought his gifts and letter would melt her heart and make her reach out to him.

\* \* \*

The old souls, Joshua and Margarete, had been in down the doldrums for many years. Some people said the miseries of the mother would get transferred to her daughter and this was making them anxious. They tried hard to put their past behind and live every present moment with happiness.

As the Buddha says, "No matter how hard the past was, you can always begin again."

This was the case with Joshua and Margarete, who began a new chapter in their lives with Gloria. As time progressed, both of them forgot the struggles of the past, though they still nursed ill feelings towards the prince, the husband of their daughter Mitchel and the father of their granddaughter Gloria.

Margarete was always afraid of what would happen when Gloria came to know the truth. It was a scary feeling for her that Gloria may want to meet her father, against Joshua's will,

and they would lose her forever. So, she agreed with Joshua to not tell Gloria anything.

At times, Gloria tried to interrogate them about her father but she was always told that her father had deserted her mother when she was pregnant. Since then, he had never come back, Margarete and Joshua told her.

Thus, Gloria was confounded by these questions: Why did her father leave her mother? Where did he go? She always found herself searching for an answer to these questions that plagued her mind constantly.

For now, the secret lay hidden in the closet of the storeroom, and the lives of Margarete, Joshua and Gloria revolved around this unsolved mystery about a life that lived beyond.

## Chapter II

# The Angel Wakes Up



In the frosty winter of January, a white angel was fast asleep.

The people of an unknown state were scattered here and there. They were screaming and howling for forgiveness from the cruel king. Their outcry was loud and clear, as they begged for reprieve from the abuse and exploitation of the king's soldiers.

But the king didn't want to spare any of them. He ordered his soldiers to engage in genocide of all Black civilians.

"Kill each one of these insects!" the king shouted to his soldiers.

The soldiers, at the king's order, opened fire at them.

The people started running here and there to save their lives.

A couple, a Black woman and her White husband, with their five-year-old white daughter, was hiding inside an old castle, promising to be with each other till their last breath.

After some time, the screaming of the people subsided. The couple decided to come out of the castle with their daughter. The moment they came out, they saw the troops of the king standing outside, ready to kill them.

"Fire at them, immediately!" the king screamed.

The soldiers opened fire at them.

The parents hid their daughter in their arms and became victims of the bullets fired upon them. The mother died first. The father, who was badly injured, whispered in his daughter's ear, "Gloria, promise that you will fight till the end. You will never quit, come what may. You are born to bring justice to the lives of people who have suffered for no fault of theirs. I trust you, my love!"

He died saying this.

All of a sudden, Gloria opened her eyes. She realised that she had woken up from her usual nightmare, a nightmare she had had from her childhood. Her nightmares had grown worse over the years and she was fighting a losing battle against them.

She placed her hands on her greenish oceanic eyes. She rubbed her hands against her milky skin and red cheeks to see if it was morning. Yet again, her mind started digging reasons for the nightmare. Her mind was like a toolbox that tried to assist her in finding hints about her future, which was linked to an unopened mystery. Her heart became nervous as she relived the brutality she had seen in her dream.

While she was busy thinking about the reason for her occasional nightmares, there was a slight snowfall outside. The snow fell on her room's window. It appeared as though God was whispering "happy birthday" through a snow spray.

Gloria stepped out of her bed, yawning to see the snow on her window. It was as if an alluring dove was getting ready to fly across the limitless sky.

She smiled looking at her table clock. Her smile was like rose petals shredding through her rubescence lips. The flash of her magnificent smile lit up the entire room, her beautiful face and her modest soul.

The wind from outside wiggled her curly, golden hair across her shoulder and distracted her eyes towards a small gift box kept on her wooden dressing table, wrapped in her favourite colour, blue.

Gloria picked up the box. It was a gift from her grandparents. Birthday wishes were written on top of the box.

She calmly opened her gift. To her surprise, she found a lovely silk ball gown in blue floral prints. A pair of white gloves with white lace trims were placed next to the gown. There were white lace trims on the sleeves and neckline of the gown too. The box also contained a pair of blue ballet slippers, a white pearl necklace, and pearl earrings.

“Wow! They are so beautiful,” she shouted in amazement.

After some time, she heard someone knocking on her bedroom door. The moment she opened the door, her grandparents greeted her.

“Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday to our angel Gloria, happy birthday to you!”

“Thank you so much, pamos. The dress and everything else are just awesome!”

Gloria called her grandparents together as ‘pamos’. ‘Pa’ for her grandpa and ‘mo’ for her grand mom.

“This is your birthday dress, which you should wear for tonight’s party, like every year,” said Margarete.

“Oh, yes, I will, pamos.”

The room was filled with smiles and happiness.

“Now, get ready, Gloria! All the people of Faithosia are waiting to greet you. Also, the King of Burkeinhem kingdom, his queen and their young prince are coming to greet you tonight. They will be joining the party as our special guests,” Joshua told Gloria.

“Oh, that’s great! It’s been two years since I saw Sam on our last day at Burkeinhem college,” Gloria said enthusiastically.

“Yes, Gloria, he is excited to meet you too. According to their letter received just now, the king wants to talk about something important and he feels this is the best occasion to have a discussion,” Joshua said thoughtfully, holding the letter in his hand.

“What sort of discussion?” Gloria asked, puzzled.

“I’ve no idea, Gloria. Let’s see when they come here. Okay, you better get ready now. We’ll see what they want to talk to us in the evening.”

“Okay, pamos, I’ll get ready quickly, and thank you so much for the present. Love you both,” she said, smiling at her grandparents.

They both kissed her forehead and left her room so that she could get ready.

After they departed, Gloria proceeded for her bath.

After some time, she came out of the bathroom wrapped in a towel. She looked at the mirror to take a glimpse of herself as an 18-year-old young woman.

She stood before her mirror and brushed out the complicated braids and curls of her goldish hair. She continued brushing her hair, as she talked to herself in the gentlest and sweetest voice in the world. “Oh, I’ve grown so much. Look at me, why am I so different from others? I mean, my skin is so white. People here are all black-skinned. Nobody resembles me. I wish I were like them. Why am I not like them? Maybe I’m like my father. Oh, I really wish I could see him.”

Deep thoughts danced in her mind, with the speed of light. Many presumptions cropped up in her mind, as she assured herself that she had perhaps taken after her father.

The old picture of her mother in her wardrobe made it clear to her that she did not look like her. Then her mind wondered if there were more people like her, staying far away from Faithosia, and if there was any chance her father could be with them.

The nightmares that had troubled her since her childhood gave rise to many questions concerning her identity, for which she had no answers. This often generated in her a feeling of despair.

At times, Gloria tried to share her nightmares with her grandma, but her grandmother always told her to ignore them, without hearing her out completely. Grandma said they were useless dreams that had nothing to do with reality. The reactions and responses from her friends in Faithosia too were similar.

Sometimes, these thoughts affected Gloria's health. So, she consulted a doctor in Burkeinheim who gave her herbal medication for relaxing her mind. But the thoughts and questions relating to her dreams always muddled her up, despite the medication.

Somewhere deep down in her heart, she always believed that her dreams were trying to convey something to her. She felt the little girl in her dreams was none other than herself and the couple were her parents. But she started losing hope when she failed to understand the meaning of the dreams. As she grew up, she ceased to share her dreams with anyone, for she knew nobody would take them seriously.

Of course, it was not easy for Gloria to forget her dreams. After all, she believed her father was involved in them. At least through the dreams, she was able to see her father's reflection.

She had never ever seen him. She knew she was missing her father more than her mother, maybe because she still had the faith that her father was alive somewhere and he had genuine reasons for leaving her and her mother. But she was afraid to share these feelings with anyone, especially her pamos, as she knew they wouldn't understand them, because they were truly against her father.

So, the only solution was to keep these dreams locked inside her heart and never let them come out.

As she plunged into the world of contemplation, she was suddenly disturbed by the cold wind coming in from her window.

When she went towards the window to shut it, she found Oreo standing in the garden of her house, staring at her. He stood motionless. They both stared at each other like two silent love birds trying to speak about their love in thousand ways.

Unexpectedly, the entire environment in her room became rhythmic. Her heart sang a song that she had written for Oreo, when she was 16.

“...thread by thread, I'm tied to you...”

Knowing that she couldn't control her feelings, Gloria immediately closed the windows and drew in the curtains to hide herself from his sight. But she couldn't remain calm. She was not able to control her magnetic attraction towards him even for a second.

Unable to resist him, Gloria tried to look at Oreo through the half-opened curtains. She found him still staring at her. She was not aware why her pulse raced at the sight of him. She didn't know what was so beautiful and engaging about his appearance that she couldn't let go of staring at him.

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