
SOUL
LOVE
JAMILA ABRÃO

SOUL LOVE

Jamila Abrão

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DEDICATION

To my father, Abrão Jacob Miguel, the strength behind my smile, the light that guides my path. Through his example, I learned the value of courage, faith, and a love that never gives up.

To my mother, Joana Antônia Miguel, in memoriam, whose love permeates every step of my life, even though she has already completed her journey on this earthly plane.

I dedicate this humble work to the best parents in the world, who taught me to love with both soul and heart.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my children, my highest flight, my daily courage to go beyond.

To my granddaughter, a love that renews itself, a ray of sunshine that illuminates my journey.

To everyone who, by embracing these pages, gives life to my dream and makes it blossom in every gaze.

EPIGRAPH

Like the cedar of Lebanon, those who love withstand the storms, keep their roots deep, transcend time, and blossom in the fullness of their being — whole and authentic.

WHEN SOULS RECOGNIZE ONE ANOTHER

In Soul Love, Jamila Abrão invites readers on an intimate and delicate journey through the depths of human emotion, where every word becomes a bridge between memory, desire, and the invisible life that pulses within us. The story unfolds between Brazil and Lebanon, dancing between past and present and revealing the enduring power of feelings that remain, even as everything around us changes.

It is a story of encounters that transcend time, of gazes that recognize a soul before the first touch, and of a love measured not by grand gestures, but by the intensity of feeling — the ability to truly see another person for who they are, at the very core of their being. Each chapter is a mosaic of moments — sunlit dawns and smiles that heal wounds — woven into a story in which vulnerability becomes strength and pain becomes learning.

The book invites readers to linger in the silence between words, to notice what is hidden within the smallest gestures, and to discover how soul love blossoms in the fullness of being, resilient even in the face of life's storms. It is a celebration of the human soul — with all its contradictions, desires, and tenderness — and of everything within us that remains whole and true.

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Soul Love is more than a love story. It is an invitation to listen deeply — to ourselves and to one another — and an awakening to the kind of sensitivity that can transform the way we experience life. Through memories woven together and emotions brought to life through words, Jamila Abrão reveals, in an intense and deeply sensitive voice, our capacity to love fully: to find beauty in imperfection and eternity in the moments that truly move us.

For those who long to feel more than simply read, for those who wish to be touched by the poetry of life and by the echo of souls finding one another, this book is a silent embrace — a light that warms the heart and awakens what lies deepest within each of us.

SOUL LOVE — PREFACE

There are moments that reveal themselves only to those willing to feel, to listen, and to perceive — not with their ears, but with their souls. There are moments that remain unseen by those who are distracted, yet quietly reveal themselves to those who allow themselves to pause, breathe, and welcome them. Each page is an invitation — a gentle call to immerse oneself in the intensity of emotion, to lose oneself in the subtle beauty of the moment, and to be touched by what pulses in silence, in waiting, and in the unseen.

Time, that invisible craftsman, does not impose itself; it teaches. It slows when there is true presence and expands when the heart recognizes meaning. Some forms of waiting are not empty, but fertile — in them, the soul matures, learns to recognize what is essential, and prepares for what has not yet arrived but already exists. Every glance, every gesture, every encounter, and every absence becomes part of our memory, echoing deep within us like waves that linger long after they have faded on the surface.

There is poetry in the details — in the touch that never happened, in the lingering gaze, in the silent promise held within a pause. There is desire in intensity, even when restrained; there is emotional faithfulness in waiting without haste. Some truths reveal themselves only in the pause between one word and the next, and some encounters begin long before the first contact. The soul recognizes what the eyes have not yet seen.

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Perhaps the purpose of these pages is not merely to tell a story, but to remind the reader that they, too, carry a story of their own — written in the deepest layers of memory, feeling, and imagination. May this book awaken within you a sensitivity to the rhythm of emotion, to the strength that resides in each moment, and to the beauty that reveals itself in both the

subtle and the intense. Above all, may it awaken the courage to feel deeply — even when it hurts — because only what truly moves through us has the power to transform us.

May you, dear reader, allow yourself to feel, to contemplate, and to be embraced by what reveals itself to you — without haste, without demands, without urgency. Allow yourself to trust in time, to rest in the unseen, and to welcome what arrives when it is meant to arrive. For what is truly felt is never lost; it remains, even when everything else has passed.

Perhaps, in this space of profound connection, we may discover that the true essence of life lies in eloquent silences, authentic emotions, and presences that take shape even across distance. In affections that know how to wait, in stories that refuse to fade, and in loves that recognize the soul even before the encounter itself. And if, by the end of these pages, something within you has been moved — even in the slightest way — then these pages will have fulfilled their destiny.

JAMILA ABRÃO

CHAPTER 1
THE SILENCE AND THE FLIGHT

It was December 2020.

Brazil breathed fear. The air carried more than oxygen: it carried uncertainty, silent farewells, weary gazes. Sirens cut through the empty streets like metallic laments, and screens glowed like candles at a collective wake — displaying numbers that seemed distant, yet held names, memories, stories and affections. Lives — thousands of them — erased by a virus that stole futures as swiftly as the sun slipped below the horizon.

Locked inside my apartment, I mourned friends and family. Time had lost its shape; silence was no longer merely the absence of sound. The ticking clock scratched at the walls, revealing how the days repeated themselves like gray copies of one another. The smell of coffee, cooling untouched, mingled with the still air. The echo of my own breathing reminded me that I still existed, even when everything around me seemed suspended. Loneliness was not just a feeling — it was almost a substance, dense and palpable, resting on my shoulders.

I existed. But I wasn't living.

I inhabited an exhausted body, plunged into a deep depression. Chronic fatigue spread through me like a dense fog. Some nights, I slept for no more than two fragile, interrupted hours. Panic and anxiety did not merely arise — they screamed, demanding space within me.

Memories no longer respected borders. They mingled with the present like long, insistent shadows. Time had lost its shape: it was not a line, but a circle; not clear, but murky, hazy. On many days, I felt like a spectator of my own existence, watching life through the window, unable to touch it, to inhabit it fully.

And yet, something persisted. A breath. A quiet restlessness pulsed in my chest, like an ancient call. I needed to act. If I stayed there, that darkness would inevitably end in tragedy.

For days, I resisted the thought of leaving. There was guilt, attachment, fear — but there was also thirst. Thirst for meaning, for belonging, for a

reunion with a part of myself I had never known, yet had always felt. It was as if my roots were murmuring, as if ancestral voices, held in my blood, were asking to be let through.

And then it happened.

One morning unlike any other, the sun shone through the window and came to rest on an old photograph of my father. Its light touched his face as if awakening something dormant. That serene, almost living gaze pierced me with a tenderness my chest could not contain. It was not a voice, but I heard it. It was not a gesture, but I felt it.

It was not an escape. It was a search.

Then I realized I needed to go. Lebanon was not just a place — it was a calling. A return to my roots. Something spiritual and profound. A flight not just to another continent, but into myself.

As the world drowned in the panic of Covid, a quiet light reached me every day: his voice.

We spoke with ease, as if the chaos outside did not exist. His words held the serenity of a safe harbor and the sweetness of someone who inhabits time calmly. Amid the collective fear, he was like a living prayer. Without my realizing it, that young man from another continent became the quiet center of my days — the anchor in the turbulent sea.

It was something rare, inexplicable. A feeling that asked for no proof, only presence. It followed neither the chronology of days nor the logic of distance. As if our souls had recognized each other before a touch, before a glance.

January arrived.

I left Brazil with two suitcases and a heart full of questions. With every step toward the airport, it was as if I were saying goodbye to a past version of myself. It looked like an escape, but it was a crossing. My father always described Lebanon as one describes a dream: the scent of olive trees, the Mediterranean breeze, the pale stone mountains rising like guardians of time. I wanted to see it. I needed to feel it. I was seeking my origins.

In the early hours of January 6, 2021, the plane broke through the clouds over Beirut. Below, the sea reflected the moon, as if guarding ancient secrets. The sky was a silent, deep blue. As the aircraft descended, my heart raced, as if recognizing a place my eyes had never seen. My soul knew: I was arriving.

I believed in the encounter.

In the silent promise.

In his presence.

But fate — that invisible conductor — has chords we cannot foresee.

After landing, I looked for his face in the crowd. There was haste in my eyes, hope in my hands, trembling in my breath.

But instead of him, two young men came.

Eyes lowered. Voices choked. A silence heavier than words.

It was as if time had slowed so I could understand every syllable.

His father had been murdered during a robbery — at the very moment my plane was leaving Brazil.

The ground gave way beneath me.

The air was gone.

It was like watching the scene from outside myself, as if my soul had been suspended between yesterday and never.

Still in shock, I was taken to the resort where I would be staying. The room was beautiful and quiet, with a serene view. But something was there — a kind of grief that had arrived before me. The silence in that room was not peace. It was a weight. It was the presence of the invisible.

I sat on the edge of the bed. The world remained standing, but I did not. The tears would not come — they stayed trapped, as if my soul were still trying to comprehend.

Lebanon greeted me with pain.

The love I had imagined finding on arrival had become absence. Yet something deep within told me that this was not an ending. It was a beginning. Different from the one I had dreamed of, but perhaps even truer.

To think that, as I rose into the sky, a life was saying goodbye to the earth. At the same instant. In the same breath of time.

At that moment, faith offered me no answers — only steadfastness. I trembled. In silence, I wondered how life could be so intense in its pain and so delicate in its mysteries.

I did not seek explanations. But I felt, with painful clarity, that everything has its appointed time, and that there is a time for every purpose under heaven. As one life departed, another arrived. It was not a replacement — never. It was a higher purpose.

My arrival did not erase the absence, but it came to hold that emptiness, to allow love to go on existing even in the face of pain. I felt, with reverence and silence, that the meeting of our souls had already been traced — and that life, in its mysterious perfection, fulfills its purposes even when we cannot understand them.

I fell asleep like this: between the distant sound of the waves and the emptiness of what could have been.

But deep within my soul, a quiet voice — like a gentle breath, almost imperceptible — was telling me:

Some love stories don't begin with flowers.

They begin with fate’s mourning, which silently prepares the meeting of souls.

CHAPTER 2

A NEW AWAKENING AND THE NIGHT AT SAINT CHARBEL

A few hours later, I woke feeling a little anxious. The seaside resort in Byblos was welcoming.

The sun was already setting over the Mediterranean, tinting the horizon gold and bronze and spreading a serene melancholy. I remained still for a few minutes, listening to the whisper of the waves as if they were ancient words, preserved by time. For the first time, I understood: this was not simply about arriving in a country; it was an encounter with something that had always existed in the depths of my being.

As I watched the sea, I thought of my father. He had left Lebanon while still very young, and now, decades later, I was making the journey in reverse — crossing the ocean in search of my true self. The stories he had told me since childhood about his homeland took shape before my eyes. Every memory seemed to prepare my heart for this moment, to feel Lebanon and breathe its essence.

I walked through the resort's gardens. The scent of flowers mingled with the sea air, and I felt I was exactly where I was meant to be. With its terraces facing the sea and walkways ending in the sand, the resort seemed made to welcome arrivals that were not only physical, but spiritual. Every breaking wave whispered: you are where you are meant to be.

Then I sensed — without seeing — a presence approaching.

The air changed.

Time seemed to stop for an instant.

I turned around... and it was him.

It was the first time our eyes met beyond screens, in the real world.

My heart raced; words fled.

His gaze carried the weight of grief, but also a serene light — that same light that had crossed oceans and endless days of waiting.

He took a step, hesitated for a moment, and then hugged me.

A long, deep hug, full of everything that had not yet been said.

I smelled incense on his clothes and felt the trembling warmth of his hands on my back.

That embrace was an encounter, a consolation, a promise.

When he drew back, his eyes were brimming with tears.

His voice came out low, barely a whisper:

“I need to go to Saint Charbel. Would you like to join me?”

I didn't ask any questions. I just nodded.

I took a jacket and followed him.

The night wind was cold.

The car moved slowly along the curves of the road up the mountain.

The lights of Byblos grew smaller in the rearview mirror as the sky filled with stars.

The silence between us grew — not as distance, but as communion.

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It seemed that fate itself was leading us.

As the car climbed, I recalled once more the stories my father had told me about Lebanon. Every detail, every memory, every corner he had

described took shape before me. These were not merely recollections; they were quiet preparations for this moment — to feel Lebanon with my eyes, ears and heart open.

By the time we reached Annaya, night had fully fallen.

The monastery appeared, dazzling, like a piece of heaven lit by soft lights, as if faith had a radiance of its own.

The air smelled of incense and eternity.

The lamps cast delicate shadows over the image of Saint Charbel, whose eyes — painted on the icon — seemed alive, attentive, almost human.

He murmured something in Arabic, a quiet prayer.

I didn't understand the words, but I felt their meaning.

Then he held my hand and said, in a trembling voice:

“You arrived at the most difficult moment of my life. God must have a purpose in all of this.”

The wind blew hard.

We embraced there, before the saint’s image, our hearts joined in silent prayer for his departed father.

It was a moment suspended in time — as if pain and love mingled in the same faith.

We returned to the resort barely speaking.

The moon accompanied the car around the bends in the road, shining brightly, as if it too were praying with us.

The silence between us said more than any words could.

When we arrived, the sea still shone in the distance beneath the silvery light of night.

He parked, took my hand and looked at me like someone who had finally found a safe harbor after a long crossing.

We went up to the room together.

The sound of the waves mingled with the gentle chill of the early hours.

We lay down without saying much.

His body still carried the weight of grief; mine, the emotion of our first meeting.

He held me in a silent, tight embrace, as if afraid of waking from a dream.

We fell asleep like that: amid the scent of incense and the murmur of the sea.

That night, I realized that love is also a form of faith.

Some encounters are no accident — they are answers.

And Saint Charbel, in his eternal silence, had witnessed ours.

CHAPTER 3

DAWN IN BYBLOS

We woke up in each other’s arms, just as we had fallen asleep.

There was something there we couldn't see — only feel.

It was more than entwined arms; it was as if each soul had found shelter in the other.

The sun rose gently over the Mediterranean, as if honoring ancient stories and sacred silences.

The first rays touched the stones of Byblos, igniting them in shades of amber and gold.

The wind brushed my face — it was not just a breeze. It was memory. It was origin. It was a calling.

He still had the weariness of grief in his eyes, but that morning there was something different.

It was as if the pain had lost its weight, slowly turning into a scar — and a scar is pain that has learned to exist with dignity.

We had breakfast on the resort’s balcony. The silence was comfortable.

There was no urgency to say anything — the sea spoke for us.

Later, he invited me to visit Byblos — “the heart of Lebanon,” he said.

I went.

We walked along the narrow alleys, where every door seemed to open into slumbering centuries.

The smell of spices blended with sea salt, as if that city had been born from the meeting of land and ocean.

He told me about the Phoenicians, the seafarers and the goods that had left that port. They carried stories. They carried worlds.

As he talked, I touched the ancient stone of the walls. It seemed alive.

It was not ruin.

It was memory.

We walked through the narrow, ancient streets of Byblos, where every stone seemed to whisper stories of millennia, until we reached a small chapel. It was a simple building leading to a little garden, where a statue of Nossa Senhora da Penha — Our Lady of Penha — stood. It had been brought from Rio de Janeiro by Lebanese immigrants returning to their homeland. The devotion preserved there spoke of more than faith: it told the story of families who crossed the ocean carrying traditions, memories and affection. It was as if Brazil and Lebanon met in that delicate space, where the simplicity of the chapel contrasted with the depth of its cultural and spiritual bond, revealing how emotional ties and ancestral memories can cross continents and take root in the heart of a land that has always been home.

Still in the souk, amid the bustle of vendors and the scent of spices, we drank cardamom coffee. The warmth of the drink mingled with the sweetness hanging in the air as I watched the vibrant colors of the fabrics, the suspended lanterns and the people coming and going.

Then we entered a small, discreet shop full of old objects, and he handed me a little cedar rosary. The wooden beads held the subtle scent of the forest and the warmth of time.

“To protect you,” he whispered.

But it wasn't just about protection.

It was a root, deep and silent, like the mountains of Lebanon.

It was solid ground, firm and welcoming, reminding me that there was a place where I belonged.

It was belonging, weaving a link between my memories, my story and that moment.

At dusk, we went to the pier.

The sky was tinged with copper and violet, and the sea was not blue anymore — it was fire.

He touched my face with care, with reverence, as if finding something sacred, and said:

“I missed you before I even met you.”

The kiss wasn't an encounter.

It was a reunion.

We went back through the illuminated alleys, hands intertwined.

Byblos seemed to breathe with the night — as if recognizing love as it came into being.

That night, as I lay down, the sound of the waves was not merely the sound of the sea.

It was as if I could hear ancient footsteps walking beside me.

Something inside me quietly opened up.

It wasn't a memory. It was a return.

Like the beginning of a film — not in front of my eyes, but inside my soul.

I saw my father as a young man, his heart full of courage and longing, setting out for Brazil and leaving his father, my grandfather, in Lebanon. Memories of him surfaced — my grandfather, a steadfast, upright man, the baladi of his town, a born leader respected not for his office, but for the dignity and honesty with which he guided his community. Then came memories of my grandmother, who had died when my father was only two, leaving a void that would shape his strength and determination throughout his life.

My beloved father crossed oceans carrying only his faith, his customs, his stories — and a silent love for this land, which never ceased to call him.

And on the other side of the world, in Brazil, he found more than a destination.

He found my mother in the countryside of Minas Gerais. They married. Built a life. A blessed family. They had three children; I was the firstborn.

In that reflective moment, I understood: my father had left Lebanon in search of the future.

I came to Lebanon in search of the past — of the roots, of the history that preceded me.

He carried this land within his heart. I brought my heart back to this land, to my origins, which had always echoed silently at the core of my

being, as if every stone, every breath of wind and every wave of the Mediterranean held the secret of who I had always been.

Perhaps fate had brought me to Lebanon not to escape from something, but to return to something.

To find again — among ruins, memories and the Mediterranean — the love that had always awaited me.

And in the silence of that moment, I realized that our lives bore different marks. I carried the weight of losses already lived through, memories that had shaped my waiting. He carried the fresh scar of absence, the still-raw pain of his father's death. Yet our experiences met, like different rivers flowing into the same sea. I sensed each of his gestures attentively, each hesitation with care — and even within those differences, the invisible thread connecting us remained firm, tender and deep.

And so I understood clearly that soul love is not measured by years lived, but by the intensity of a heart that chooses to remain.

CHAPTER 4
A SOUL CONNECTION

Another day together in Byblos — this time, the city seemed to be watching us.

We visited the Orthodox Church, where the smell of incense enveloped the stone walls and the sound of burning candles seemed to speak to our memories. The stained glass filtered the light in soft, almost golden tones, and for an instant I felt time was not linear, but circular.

It was as if everything we had once been and everything we would one day be had come together there, at that very moment.

We went out and walked slowly through the old lanes, through the colorful souk, past hanging lamps and fabrics dancing in the wind, amid the scents of za'atar, coffee, dried roses and spices.

And the sea… always the sea. Silent, eternal, accompanying us at every step, witnessing what was coming to life between us.

We laughed. We talked. We told simple stories. We bought small souvenirs.

But there was something deeper — as if Byblos held its breath so as not to interrupt us.

The city seemed to exist only for us — as if every stone, every wave, every breath of wind already knew that this meeting was written long before it happened. As night fell, the resort wrapped itself in slow, serene shadows, like veils of silence.

Outside, the sea whispered — not a song, but a prayer.

The wind from the Mediterranean came with the scent of salt and cedar, as if announcing something bigger than us.

We walked into the room still laughing at the little stories of the day.

But there was something different in the air.

A dense silence, full of meaning, that did not weigh on us — it rested.

As if fate stood at the door, waiting only for us to recognize it.

Our gazes met, and for an instant time stopped.

There was no more mourning. There was no more loneliness.

There were only the two of us, recognizing each other — not through the mind, not through the body, but through the soul.

It was in this silence that it all began.

Not with urgency. Not with hurried desire.

But with reverence.

We drew closer slowly, almost shyly, as if we were approaching something sacred and feared profaning it.

Then it became inevitable — like the tide that always returns.

Each touch carried stories we had not lived together, yet which seemed preserved somewhere deep in the soul’s memory.

As if we had already loved each other in other times, in other lives, in other ports.

It was more than desire — it was recognition.

The sheets held the sound of restrained laughter, of breath catching, of love revealing itself through gentle, profound gestures.

There was no hurry — just surrender.

The scent of incense still hung in the air, mixed with the smell of the sea and the silent vibration of faith that had united us since Annaya.

We weren't just living — we were sealing something.

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He held my face in his hands and whispered my name.

My name... as if he had just learned it and, at the same time, as if he had always known how to say it.

With that touch, I understood:

all the losses, all the waiting, all the interrupted paths — everything had led us there.

To the exact moment when love ceased to be a promise and became a presence.

In the dimness of the room, before sleep had fully claimed us, I realized that this encounter asked for no explanation.

There was a serene gravity to it, like things that need no name in order to exist.

This was not a love that arrived making promises — it was a love that arrived carrying memory.

I felt something within me falling back into place.

As if old parts of me, wounded by time and absence, had finally found rest.

It was not a dramatic healing or a sudden redemption — it was an alignment.

Everything, for the first time in a long time, seemed to take its rightful place.

There, I understood that some connections do not come to fill our emptiness, but to reveal who we have always been, even when we forget.

And certain encounters do not lead us off our path — they are the path.

We remained like that: between the sacred and the human.

Between flesh and faith.

Between touch and peace.

Our bodies met as if time belonged to us.

And for a few hours, the world simply ceased to exist.

When the early hours came, we remained in each other’s arms — in silence.

But it was a different silence.

It was not an absence of words — it was fullness.

Outside, the sea continued to murmur.

The wind came from the top of the mountains, bringing the distant memory of the cedars and the light of Annaya.

And in that gentle breath of wind, I felt — with a certainty beyond thought — that Saint Charbel's blessing extended over us, not to judge, but to entrust everything to God.

We fell asleep like that: amid sighs, memories we had not lived and promises we had not spoken — but which already existed.

And before sleep overtook me, I felt within me a soft, almost sacred certainty:

It wasn't chance.

It was destiny.

CHAPTER 5

A SNOW DAY IN LAKLOUK

We woke to the shy sun filtering through the curtains and the distant sound of the sea.

It was as if the day had been sewn with threads of light and silence.

There was a serene peace in the air — and the faint expectation of something I didn't yet know how to name.

He looked at me and smiled. It was not just any smile; it held rest and healing — the smile of someone who had found a safe harbor, even without knowing whether the wind would change direction.

Then he said, almost whispering:

“Today I want to show you one of the most beautiful things Lebanon has to offer.”

We set out early, the morning light still stretching across the mountains.

On one side, the blue Mediterranean slowly saying goodbye; on the other, the green hills that, curve after curve, gave way to white — a white that grew, silent, soft, until it dominated the landscape like an ancient secret.

My heart was beating fast.

It was the first time.

The first time I would see — not only with my eyes, but with my soul — snow.

As the first flakes began to fall gently against the car windows, I said nothing. I simply watched.

He stopped by the side of the road and, while laughing, opened the door.

It was like opening the door to another world.

The cold air enveloped me like an unexpected hug.

I stretched out my hands and there they were: small, fragile, silent — the snowflakes melting slowly on my warm skin.

I smiled. Not just with my lips, but with my whole heart.

It was a pure, innocent joy that needed no explanation.

As soon as we stepped into the snow, I could not contain myself.

I began laughing, shouting and tossing handfuls of snowflakes into the air.

I spun around, as if trying to embrace the whole world.

He watched me, laughing too, with that rare look: the look of someone watching another person live a moment that would never come again.

My joy couldn't be contained — it simply overflowed.

Laklouk looked like a living painting.

Stone houses with roofs covered in white, smoking chimneys, the scent of hearth fires, pine and coffee.

Children slid down the slopes; the mountains rose like sleeping giants.

And the silence…

A different kind of silence.

It was not emptiness — it was presence.

As we walked, he asked me:

“Do you prefer skiing or riding a Ski-Doo?”

I smiled and answered without thinking:

“The Ski-Doo. It seems safer.”

And so we went.

The cold wind cut across my face as the snowmobile glided over the endless white.

Everything around us was immense. Dazzling. Pure.

There, I understood: snow was not merely winter — it was memory. It was a pause. It was healing.

Suddenly, on a steeper turn, we lost our balance and fell into the snow.

For an instant, everything was silent.

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Then light, spontaneous laughter broke through the icy air.

We were covered in snow, laughing like children.

Thank God, we were unhurt — only our hearts were full.

We took pictures — a lot of them.

Before the cedars, on the slopes, at the bends that shone beneath the pale sun.

We made a snowman, clumsy and charming.

When we finished, he put a twig on its head and said:

“Now it's perfect.”

And it was. Not because of the twig.

But because we were laughing. Together.

Without fear. Without urgency.

As if the world were finally at peace.

Time felt suspended.

Nothing weighed on us. Nothing hurt.

Everything was white, light, alive.

And it was there, in the simplicity of that day, that I noticed something subtle happening within him.

As if the ice of the mountains had also melted something frozen by time.

When the sun began to set, the sky went pink, gold and gray, like a soft veil over the mountains.

We stopped at a stone chalet, before a lit fireplace.

The smell of cardamom coffee filled the air.

He held me — a slow embrace that seemed in no hurry to end — and whispered:

“I wish I could freeze this moment.”

I wished it too.

Because some joys cannot be explained — only kept within the soul, until one day they become eternity.

Snow covered the mountains of Laklouk.

But it was love that warmed our souls.

And while the world outside remained cold and distant, in that silent shelter, we discovered:

True warmth does not come from fire.

It comes from encounters.

When two souls recognize each other.

And as the snow lay over Laklouk, untouched and serene, I understood that that day was not merely a landscape — it was a milestone.

Some encounters warm us; others transform us.

This one did both.

In the white stillness of the mountains, something within us was sealed wordlessly.

Not a promise made aloud, but a truth acknowledged within.

The snow would fall, the sun would return, the days would run their course — but that moment would remain suspended in time, kept in the place where certainties that need no explanation live.

And I knew, with the simplicity of someone who simply feels: some days do not pass.

They remain.

CHAPTER 6

FROM SNOW TO SEA

We left Laklouk still under the soft glow of dusk.

The snow, now lightly gilded by the last rays of sunlight, seemed to bid us farewell with the tenderness of someone who understands that some encounters are eternal, even when they end.

The car descended slowly, as if the road itself knew that, on that day, haste would disturb the delicacy of the moment.

Inside the car, the silence was alive, full of meaning.

It was not emptiness — it was presence.

The presence of laughter, of the unexpected fall in the snow, of shy gestures trying to conceal what the heart already knew.

The presence of a feeling that did not hurry or reveal itself all at once, but grew in silence — like the roots of an olive tree before it emerges into the light.

He drove calmly.

The headlights caught the melting snow, which reflected like little mirrors of light.

I looked through the window and could not tell whether I was seeing the road or the day’s memories.

The mountains still held echoes of our joy, as if they had witnessed something sacred — something that couldn't be photographed or explained, only lived.

At every turn, a new landscape emerged.

The pure white of the mountain gave way to the deep green of the pine trees.

Soon, the sea began to appear on the horizon — first timid, then immense — as if welcoming us with open arms.

It was like passing through two landscapes of the soul: one that freezes the body and awakens the soul, and another that warms the skin and soothes the heart.

Our hands, every now and again, met over the console.

A soft, almost absentminded touch — yet nothing about it was unintentional.

There was understanding, there was a silent promise, there was surrender.

Not rushed passion, but recognition.

It wasn't fire — it was light.

The Mediterranean was waiting for us dressed in gold.

Byblos seemed to whisper a welcome, as if recognizing the return of someone who had left transformed.

The wind was no longer cold — it was a breeze.

It carried salt, history and that faint scent of jasmine that only Lebanon seems to hold at dusk.

We stepped out of the car with the reverence of someone arriving at a sacred place.

We walked slowly through the resort, as if the ground still carried echoes of the snow we left behind.

He held my hand firmly — and in that gesture there was something that neither snow nor sea could translate.

We sat on the balcony and the world fell silent.

The sea breathed before us, and the sky began to extinguish its light, as if honoring the beginning of something rare.

The wind brushed our hair and brought back memories of Annaya — of the faint scent of incense, the calm beyond description, the faith beyond explanation.

I closed my eyes.

I felt a before and an after.

As if the woman who had arrived in Lebanon seeking answers had finally understood that some answers are not found — they reveal themselves.

And they reveal themselves when the heart stops questioning and begins to listen.

When I opened my eyes, he was looking at me.

And in that look, wordlessly, there was everything.

Closeness. Gratitude. Connection.

And that feeling seemed to reach the infinite, even in the simplest human gestures.

We stayed there in each other’s arms, watching the sky come alive with stars.

No promises were made.

No words were needed.

Time stood still — as if to let the soul breathe before returning to life.

A day that started with snowflakes ended with the warm softness of the Mediterranean.

Between the cold and the sea, between the top of the mountain and the edge of the Mediterranean, I understood: some loves don't come to be defined — they come to reveal the divine within us.

And, in that silence between sky and sea, I felt that God also moves through our lives this way: without making noise, without insisting that anything stay, but awakening what lay dormant — and trusting that the soul will know what to do next.

I didn't know what would come afterwards.

But I knew I wasn't the same anymore.

Between the snow and the sea, something within me had learned to recognize the beauty of the moment — and that, in itself, had already changed everything.

That night, before falling asleep, I understood with a peaceful soul: some encounters do not come to belong — they come to awaken.

CHAPTER 7

THE PEACE WITHIN US

I woke up to the sound of the sea and the soft aroma of freshly brewed coffee.

The golden light of dawn filtered through the curtains, tracing delicate patterns on the room’s white walls.

For a moment, I didn't know where I was — until I felt the fresh air coming from the balcony and the serenity that only Lebanon could give me.

He was there in silence, watching the horizon.

The sun rose over the Mediterranean like a blessing, and the wind played with his hair, still disheveled by the night.

For a few seconds, I simply gazed at him — as if watching the miracle of life quietly rebuilding itself.

“Sleep well?” I asked, in a hoarse voice, caught between sleep and emotion.

He turned and smiled. A brief smile, yet full of calm.

“I slept peacefully, for the first time since my father passed away.”

Those words pierced me like a ray of tenderness.

The man before me — strong, yet wounded — carried absence within him, and the courage to go on.

And for the first time, I realized that peace is born not from the absence of pain, but from the meeting of two souls that recognize in each other the same weariness and the same wish to begin again.

We had breakfast on the balcony — pita bread, labneh, olives, white cheese and the sweet aroma of za'atar.

The sea shimmered before us, and every sip felt like a silent prayer.

We didn't talk much.

Nothing more was needed.

There was a gentle harmony between us, as if Saint Charbel had left an invisible thread uniting us — not to erase the past, but to make it light enough to move on.

When he reached out and touched my hand, something in me quieted.

It was not a sudden passion or a promise of eternity — but recognition.

It was the meeting of two souls who, tired of losing, had simply chosen to be.

The day unfolded slowly and serenely.

As the sun rose over the ancient ruins of Byblos, I realized that Lebanon was not just the land of my father's origins.

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It was the place where two wounded paths met to be reborn.

And as the bells of the nearby church echoed over the sea, I felt a silent prayer spring up within me.

I was grateful — for him, for me, for that moment when it all made sense.

There, between the sound of the sea and the echo of prayers, peace began to dwell within us: his, as his grief finally found rest; and mine, as I understood that true love is also a form of healing.

At night, silence took over the room.

I opened the notebook on the table and let the words flow, unhurriedly.

I did not write to remember, but to keep what time should not erase.

Outside, the sea whispered — but this time, there was something different.

My heart, once restless, beat gently.

And as the silence of the night deepened, I felt that every moment we had lived up to that point had left an indelible mark on us.

They were not just memories — they were roots planted in the soul, which would grow in strength and calm over time.

And even without words, I knew that this peace would not abandon us; it would remain, quiet but steadfast, like a lighthouse guiding those who had learned to navigate their own waters.

Perhaps that was what they call peace: not the absence of what hurts, but the quiet presence of someone who has come to understand that everything happened according to God's purposes.

I closed the diary and looked up at the sky.

Stars were shining over Byblos like ancient promises.

The gentle wind blew across the balcony, carrying the scent of the sea, flowers and incense that still hung in the air.

The moonlight reflected in the waves, dancing with every silent gesture between us.

And at that moment, I knew that true love is more than a feeling — it is light that warms, wind that guides, and a sea that teaches us to navigate toward the soul's safe harbor.

And, deep down, I understood: the journey was just beginning, but we were already whole, together, and at peace.

CHAPTER 8

LEBANON, MY REFUGE: BATROUN AND ARNAOON VILLAGE

Lebanon was not just a place — it was a shelter, a mirror, a living memory.

It was the meeting of two souls who, perhaps, had already loved each other in another time, under the same Lebanese sky.

There, I saw myself whole, at peace: a peace born not out of silence, but out of recognition, surrender and acceptance of the past.

It was the peace of someone beginning to live in the present as a gentle, constant prayer.

That morning, we left for Batroun.

The road followed the Mediterranean through green landscapes, and the wind played with my hair, mingling the scent of wild herbs with the citrus fragrance of lemons growing on the slopes.

Sunlight shone on stone houses and trees, and every bend in the road seemed a living painting, where the green of the earth mingled with the blue of the sky.

He smiled, saying I looked like a little girl — and indeed, my heart leaped as if every patch of shade beneath a tree, every ray of sunlight, were a game meant just for me.

The sound of birds and wind intertwined with our laughter, creating a melody that seemed to exist only for us.

Upon arriving in Batroun, we first visited the Greek Orthodox Church of Our Lady of the Sea.

Inside, the subtle scent of incense and candles mingled with the reverent silence, and each step on the ancient floor seemed to echo stories of

generations gathered there in prayer.

The place had a charming simplicity: stone walls, small colored windows, and filtered light dancing among the candles, casting little pools of gold into every corner, over the stone walls and old pews. For a few minutes, we remained silent, each absorbing the surroundings, feeling the gentle weight of history and the lightness of faith that seemed to hover in the air. Each step over the ancient floor echoed softly, reminding us that generations had gathered there in prayer, leaving quiet stories of hope and devotion behind them.

We left the church and descended to the Phoenician wall by the sea, a corridor of stone that seemed suspended between sky and water. Each stone held centuries of memory, traces of the ancient Phoenicians who had skillfully and courageously built this structure to protect Batroun from the waves and the passage of time. Sunlight warmed the rocks, while the wind passed through, carrying the salty scent of the Mediterranean.

Eagles soaring majestically overhead, the salty sea breeze and sunlight reflected on stone made everything more magical, as if the city were welcoming us into its ancient heart.

Walking down that corridor was a ritual of presence: I felt history, time and the strength of the past pulsing beneath my fingers, reminding me that life endures, reinvents itself and preserves eternal memories.

He told me about the importance of the wall and the church, guardians of Lebanon's faith and tradition — monuments that stood there, protecting memories, stories and devotion, reminding us that life resists and reinvents itself without ever losing sight of the future.

We stopped for fresh lemonade, made with local lemons.

“Time seems to slow down here, doesn't it?” I asked.

“That is because here, the heart understands what the mind has never understood,” he answered, touching my hand gently.

Then we continued to Arnaoon Village, a century-old village in the hills of Batroun, with stone houses, dirt paths and little corners that preserve Lebanon’s culture and history.

There, everything invited us to live intensely — horseback riding, gliding along a zip line, admiring the landscape or taking on daring

challenges — everything seemed to invite us to live without fear.

He wanted to try the bicycle suspended on a high wire; I looked down and smiled, declining. The butterflies in my stomach outweighed my curiosity.

Afterwards, we went horseback riding.

Riding awakened a flood of emotions.

The scent of the earth, the wind against my face and the rhythm of the horse took me back to childhood, when I galloped with a heart that was light, happy and full.

The wind carried the scent of wildflowers and damp earth, and the sound of hooves on the ground mingled with distant birdsong. Each gallop was almost a silent dialogue between my heart and the landscape, a reminder that the present can be as vivid as memory.

This time, however, something deeper happened: as the horse moved quietly forward, a gentle, profound memory stirred within me.

I saw my mother — my beloved mother, whom I missed so much — still young, smiling beside my sister and me during our trips to the countryside of Minas Gerais, her birthplace.

I also remembered the little town where she was born, its quiet streets, my grandparents, whom I missed too, the bright days and the rides on horseback at the farm.

It was as if the horse, the fields and the wind had the power to rescue what could never be lost: love, childhood, roots.

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A sweet longing took hold of my heart — not as an absence, but as a living presence. At that moment, every step of the horse was a silent

dialogue between past and present, memory and emotion, freedom and trust.

I felt the same heart beating inside me, the same pure joy, almost impossible to contain.

Then came the zip line.

Adrenaline coursed through my body like liquid electricity.

The wind cut across my face; laughter escaped unbidden, and for a few seconds the world seemed suspended.

In the air, everything seemed to expand infinitely. The blue sky blended with the horizon, and for a moment I felt my body and the landscape as one — free, weightless, in perfect harmony with the vastness of Lebanon.

Every second was pure experience, felt on the skin, heard in the heart, breathed in the soul.

Hunger struck, and we moved on to a meal that celebrated Arab cuisine in all its richness.

Each dish was poetry: creamy hummus fragrant with olive oil; fresh, green, aromatic tabbouleh; golden kibbeh, crisp outside and soft within; stuffed grape leaves; vibrant salads of tomato, cucumber and herbs; and Arab sweets that melted in the mouth, made with walnuts, pistachios, honey and orange blossom, like little pieces of heaven.

The aroma of cardamom and spices mingled with the breeze, while quiet conversations around us blended with laughter. Each taste was a sensory journey, and each gesture, a celebration of life's abundance and Lebanon's generosity.

As we returned to Byblos, he smiled and asked:

“Room for another surprise?”

Before I could answer, he parked in front of L’abeille D’Or, the pastry shop. I waited, curious.

He returned with a small box, carefully packed, and we drove to the edge of the Mediterranean.

“This is knafeh. The best Arab sweet there is,” he said, opening the lid.

We sat on rocks beside the sea, sunlight falling softly over our hands, while the warm, delicious sweet scented the air with orange blossom.

The light wind stirred the Mediterranean, creating shimmering reflections that seemed to dance over our hands. The scent of the dessert mingled with the salty breeze, and the sunset wrapped every detail in a golden glow, making the moment almost sacred, as if time had decided to stop just for us.

He handed me the knafeh, and I took my first bite, my eyes widening in delight:

“Oh… knafeh is the food of the gods!” I exclaimed, laughing.

He laughed too, and our gazes met, sharing the wonder of that moment.

The wind caressed our hair, and the scent of the sweet mingled with the salty breeze, making the moment almost magical.

Sitting there, looking at the horizon, I realized that Lebanon was not just a place: it was a refuge, a moment of fullness, made from adventures, laughter, aromas and flavors.

There, body, mind and soul rested in harmony, recognizing each other and celebrating the present.

There, where adventure, flavors, aromas and light met, I felt that Lebanon was not merely a refuge, but a mirror of life itself: intense, full of color and contrast, yet deeply harmonious.

My soul grew quiet, my heart expanded, and love — quiet, generous love — remained in every gesture, in every breath of wind and every ray of sunlight that accompanied us.

And in that moment, before night enfolded us, I gave thanks — for life, for love and for the gift Lebanon offered us, full, intense and eternal.

CHAPTER 9

THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD: FROM THE LOCANDA TO PALMS THE LEGEND

The day dawned gently, wrapped in an almost absolute tranquility. The room still held the night's silence, and morning light entered slowly, settling on the walls like a gesture of care. While he slept, I stayed there, watching his peaceful breathing, feeling that everything was whole, in balance, sheltered by the stillness of that dawn.

After breakfast, we walked through the historic center of Byblos. We visited the UNESCO headquarters. It was more than a building: it was a quiet guardian of stories that had endured through time. There, I understood that preservation means more than conserving ancient stones or ruins; it means protecting humanity's memory from oblivion, from barbarity, from the haste that erases meaning. Each stone seemed to whisper memories of civilizations that had survived change, war and human hands.

I walked slowly, feeling the symbolic weight of the place. I thought of how many stories had been recognized as heritage not because they were perfect, but because they had endured. Entire civilizations had passed, fallen, been reborn. Wars, loves, losses and rebuilding were inscribed in stone, a quiet reminder that time does not destroy everything — it transforms.

We continued to the harbor. The sea was calm, and little boats rocked gently, some decorated for birthdays, others for sunset trips. The scent of salt mingled with mint and spices. The harbor pulsed with life and memories.

When I spotted the Locanda restaurant, my heart skipped a beat.

"I want to have lunch here," I said without hesitation.

He nodded, accepting a simple invitation, and we headed towards the restaurant.

As we approached, I realized that the Locanda was more than a restaurant; it was a bridge between eras and cultures. The stone walls told quiet stories of Byblos, and every step through the place seemed to touch centuries of tradition, reminding us that history still walked there. Small paintings and decorative objects, old photographs of the city and mementos of the family that had founded the restaurant gave it an atmosphere of warmth and living memory. Open windows let in the breeze and the faint scent of the sea, mingling with coffee and spices from the kitchen. An invitation to sit, breathe and let time slow down.

The Locanda was a place where the present met the past: every detail seemed to have been thought out so that visitors not only ate a meal, but felt the soul of Byblos — the history, culture and intensity of a city that stood the test of time with dignity and lightness.

Sitting on the balcony, overlooking the harbor and the ancient walls, I asked:

“Have you heard about this restaurant’s history? Who founded it? Was the founder Lebanese or Italian?”

“A little, but I want to hear from you.”

“I have heard a great deal about it. They say it is a distinctive restaurant that brings tradition and creativity together, with dishes that honor Lebanese cuisine yet still surprise the palate. And the view… well, seeing all this, I am certain: you do not find a combination of history, aroma and beauty like this every day.”

“You know, I am very excited to visit this restaurant. It is so distinctive. I have always loved food, and I always joke that I am a chef,” I confessed with a smile.

When the dishes arrived, a sudden memory of my mother’s kitchen in Brazil came over me. I remembered the care and tenderness with which she prepared each Arab dish. My mother was a master of Arab cuisine. The Locanda’s stuffed grape leaves were sublime, matched only by those she made. In that moment, childhood memories surfaced, sweet, intense and full of flavor. The creamy, aromatic dips — hummus, baba ghanoush and

labneh — brought back Sundays with the family. Every bite seemed a bridge between past and present, between Byblos and Brazil.

During lunch, we talked and decided to go to a traditional Arab celebration that evening. It was an opportunity to experience the culture, to immerse myself in the music, dance and joy that had always made Lebanon such an enchanting country.

That evening, we headed to Jounieh, where Palms the Legend awaited us — a vibrant venue famous for its memorable parties, bringing food, music and dance together. The place radiated energy: colored lights danced on the walls and over smiling faces, while the pulsing music filled the air, inviting us at every step to surrender to the moment.

As we entered, the atmosphere swept over me: scents of perfume, drinks, spices and flowers mingled with the faint fragrance of night. Every detail seemed designed to enchant — elegantly set tables, comfortable sofas, open spaces offering views of the starry sky over Jounieh, as if the entire city shared in the celebration.

Belly dancers turned gracefully, their coins and fabrics gleaming in the warm light. DJs played beats that mingled with laughter and conversation, creating an intense urban symphony. Curious glances met, some full of admiration, others simply caught up in the place's infectious energy.

He drew me close as a gentle, more captivating song began. We embraced, and for a few minutes there were only the two of us — two hearts in harmony, surrounded by the warmth and energy of a night that seemed to promise eternity.

As the party went on, I realized that Jounieh, with its blend of modernity and tradition, was a perfect stage for that moment: city, music, dance and emotion converging for a single purpose — to celebrate life, love and a moment that belonged to us.

And there, among lights, rhythms and aromas, I understood that the real charm was not only the party, but shared presence, quiet closeness and the intensity of feeling each moment as unique.

The room pulsed with life: lights, laughter, bursts of pyrotechnics inside the club, and Lebanese flags fluttering everywhere. Hookah smoke mingled with people's perfumes, while music, smiles and glances created an intense,

enveloping atmosphere. When a famous Arab singer entered, a collective shiver ran through the crowd; everyone was swept up in the rhythm, the voice, the energy that seemed to reach every corner of the room.

There, we met two of his friends, each with a companion. The women's eyes lingered on me, traveling from head to toe as they exchanged silent comments. No words were spoken, but the judgment was there — subtle, dense, impossible to ignore.

Ever since arriving in Lebanon, I had noticed curious glances everywhere I went. My Arab features drew attention — the shape of my face, my nose, my expression, all inherited from my father — but above all, it was the way I communicated, my confidence and my open smile that attracted people. Men and women approached, commented and paid me compliments. Something about my way of being stirred interest and curiosity. I felt the weight of being noticed, of being observed, and also the subtle prejudice surrounding us, silent, almost imperceptible, but present.

Suddenly, Llegaste, the Spanish-language version by Roberto Carlos and Jennifer Lopez, began to play. He drew me close, and our bodies fit together as if they had always belonged to each other. The world around us disappeared, dissolving into the warmth of our embrace, the rhythm of the music, his scent surrounding me. Every touch and every shared breath made time pause. For a moment — brief, intense, almost sacred — there were only the two of us, surrendered to the warmth of desire and an intimacy that spoke without words.

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The intensity of being there was unlike anything else: on one side, I felt the tension of the curious glances surrounding us, silently judging every gesture; on the other, there was our complete surrender, a space that belonged only to us, where every touch and every breath created a closeness

no one could reach. Music pulsed through the room, bodies moved in harmony, and he held my hand firmly. For a few moments, the outside world disappeared, leaving only us, aware of every movement, every sigh, every shared silence.

In the early hours, the night began to dissolve into silence. The club's lights fell behind us, its sounds and music still echoing in memory as we walked to the car. The fresh night air contrasted with the intensity inside, and each step seemed to prolong what we had lived, as if we wanted to carry our closeness and shared presence away with us. There was calm, but also the memory of other people's glances, a quiet reminder that even in surrender, the world was watching.

On the drive from Palms the Legend to the resort, silence filled the car, broken only by the engine's gentle sound. As the city passed slowly beyond the windows, I thought about the two young women's glances at the club — curious, attentive, laden with prejudice. It was strange to feel watched and isolated at once, part of a world that did not understand our choices. Every kilometer seemed to lengthen the night and draw me closer to myself, revealing the contrast between the freedom of being beside him and the outside world's quiet pressure.

When we reached the resort, I felt the need to unburden myself. I began:

"You saw their looks… Did you feel it? Society treats things differently when the man is older. Nobody judged my parents so harshly. But when the woman is older, the world makes her answer for it. Always."

He remained silent.

"Do you know the story of Macron, the president of France?" I continued. "He fought to stay, fought for his wife, who had been his teacher. He faced prejudice, faced society, faced everything that opposed their love. He did not give up. He stood firm, and he succeeded. They married and broke with the conventions of a prejudiced society."

He didn't answer.

"My father always said: life is like a burning candle. It can burn to the end, illuminating everything — or go out suddenly. If it is love, do not be afraid. Love. Do not give in to fear."

I took a deep breath. Then I said what weighed on me most:

“I think I'm pregnant.”

The silence was absolute. He paced around the room, restless, murmuring short phrases, confused, frightened.

So I said, firmly:

“You can go. It is better to end this now, before the world destroys us.”

His eyes filled with tears. He lowered his head without a word. He simply gathered a few things, opened the door and left.

No words. Just silence. But the sea outside persisted. As always. Like everything that is bigger than us.

At that moment, I understood that what existed between us was real, delicate and precious. But his immaturity and his difficulty in facing the world and everything love demands kept us from continuing.

In those early hours, I sat for a long time, listening to the sea’s unbroken sound. It did not judge, did not question, did not demand explanations. It simply went on — true to its nature. I thought of how often the world weighs more heavily on women, how often we are called to carry alone what should be shared. Courage, I realized, is not always found in persisting. Sometimes, it lies in letting go.

I did not cry at once. A strange serenity lived within me, mingled with pain. I had not lost myself. I had not begged for love or bargained away my dignity. I had loved truthfully — and no one could take that from me. The world can be hard on those who dare to step outside its molds, but no burden is greater than living in betrayal of your own heart.

Listening to the constant murmur of the sea, I realized that every experience, every glance and every gesture had transformed me in a silent but profound way. It wasn't just about love or the absence of it; it was about me, about the courage to face my feelings, to accept what can't be changed, and to honor what remains true.

I also understood that life does not wait, yet neither does it hurry. Every decision, every loss and every reunion belongs to the same flow — a current that inevitably brings us back to ourselves. And I was there: whole, aware of my roots, of the blood running through my veins, of the strength that carried me, ready to continue with an open heart, even when the world demands silence, patience and courage.

I finally lay down as the sun was rising. The room was quiet, but I was not empty. Something within me remained whole. And at that moment, I understood that surviving love is also a form of courage — perhaps the loneliest, perhaps the most necessary.

And so I fell asleep, feeling that all of this was also a form of rebirth — a quiet promise that life always goes on, without waiting for us to piece ourselves back together, but teaching us to keep our hearts whole.

CHAPTER 10

LIFE MOVES ON: FROM JOUNIEH TO BEIRUT AND THE FORTRESS OF THE RAOUCHÉ ROCKS

The separation brought a deep stillness, an inner winter that settled over me for a few days like a silent cloak. It was not the emptiness of absence, but the space before a new beginning, inviting the soul to find itself again and listen to its own voice. In that quiet call, I understood: I needed to return to my origins, follow the trail of my roots, travel through memories flowing quietly through time, and rediscover the essence that had always preceded me.

Before traveling to northern Lebanon, I visited my uncle in Jounieh, my father's only surviving brother. As I entered the house, my attention was immediately drawn to a photograph of my grandfather, carefully placed on the living room wall. It was a serene image, full of dignity and tenderness, and I was enchanted — for a moment, I felt him there among us, looking on with the affection he had always held for the family.

The day unfolded with lightness and joy. My cousins arrived, and we took many photographs. We prepared a traditional Arab barbecue. The scent of glowing embers mingled with the fragrance of the air, and laughter flowed freely among us. We drank arak, toasting life and health, and embraced, celebrating what truly matters: presence, love and the family that lives on in the heart. Every gesture seemed simple, yet full of meaning. It was a fulfilling day, rich in human warmth, in memories mingling with the present, and in a quiet affection that filled every corner of the house.

Toward the end of the day, I went to the Raouché Rocks in Beirut and was immediately swept away by the beauty of the place. I was with my cousin, so kind and attentive; she had invited me, and I had readily accepted. The imposing rock formations rose from the sea like quiet

guardians of the coast, enduring time and the waves that broke gently at their feet. The sky turned gold, pink and lilac, reflected in the calm water, while the fresh breeze carried the salty scent of the Mediterranean. I felt small before that grandeur, yet deeply connected to the moment — each breath seemed to absorb its eternity.

Before the imposing Raouché Rocks, I felt a sense of protection and endurance. That fortress of stone, standing for centuries against time and the Mediterranean waves, reflected something deep within me: the fortress of my own being. Every change, every farewell, every reunion life had brought me had carved out a quiet, resilient strength. Just as the rock stands firm against wind and tide, my heart was learning to withstand transformation, find new meaning in the past and welcome the present with courage and serenity. At that moment, I realized that despite everything, I was whole — solid, strong and ready to go on.

After watching the sunset, we crossed the street and entered a wonderful pastry shop. Its displays overflowed with Arab sweets: crisp, golden baklava; ma'amoul filled with walnuts, pistachios and dates; warm knafeh, covered with melted cheese and drizzled with fragrant orange blossom syrup. We ordered cardamom coffee, its intense aroma mingling with the sweetness of the pastries, making every bite an almost magical experience. As I savored each delight, I let the flavors, colors and aromas reconnect me with the essence of Lebanon — intense, generous and alive.

When night finally fell, with the starry sky reflected in the city, I returned quietly to the resort, carrying the day's peace and wonder, and the feeling that time had paused simply to let me savor every detail and my family's company.

Upon arriving at the resort, I took out my cell phone and called my father. His voice, always serene, brought me immediate comfort. I recounted every moment: the visit to my uncle's house in Jounieh, the barbecue, the toast with arak, the conversations, the hugs and the joy of meeting the whole family. I described every detail, every smile, every shared memory, and told him that I was packing my bags to go on a trip to northern Lebanon, to the city where he was born, where my roots were intertwined with the history of the family and the land. There was silence on the other end of the line, but I felt his presence and the warmth of his

gaze, as if, even from a distance, we were together in that moment of reunion and expectation.

My father was overjoyed to hear about my day in Jounieh. He said he deeply missed his brother and the whole family. Between laughter and memories, he recommended that I use the trip north to visit our cousin, who lived with her daughters in El Hed, a small town near Dahr El Laysineh. He explained that she was around his age. I felt a gentle warmth in my heart as I imagined reconnecting with another part of the family, strengthening ties and hearing stories that, like mine, remained rooted in Lebanon. It was like receiving a map of affection, an invitation to go deeper into the memories that connected me to my origins.

I ended the call with a contented sigh and lingered on the resort's balcony, absorbing the tranquility of the night. The air was fresh and light, carrying the scent of the sea and nearby flowers. Every sound seemed to slow time: the whisper of the breeze through the palms, the murmur of the waves, the nighttime songs of birds still stirring beneath the moon.

A serene calm enfolded me, as if all of Lebanon were welcoming me into its arms, reminding me that life is made of steps, encounters and memories that quietly accompany us. With every breath, I felt that the day, with its human warmth, laughter, flavors and stories, had left gentle, precious marks on my soul.

And in that stillness, a sweet anticipation came over me. Tomorrow, I would head north to Dahr El Laysineh, retrace my father's paths, meet our cousin in El Hed and walk through landscapes holding centuries of history and family roots. My heart beat with the promise of reunions and discoveries. It was as if every star in the night sky were twinkling to announce what was yet to come — new stories, new embraces, new parts of myself waiting to be revealed.

I took a deep breath and closed my eyes. Life went on, full of surprises, encounters and emotions still to be lived, and I felt, with clarity and serenity, that I was exactly where I needed to be: in the heart of Lebanon, in the heart of myself.

CHAPTER 11

A RETURN TO MY ROOTS: DAHR EL LAYSINEH AND EL HED

Northern Lebanon opened before me like an ancient book written in light. Mountains and valleys alternated beneath a golden glow that warmed my skin and soothed my breathing. Olive trees heavy with fruit, sturdy walnut trees and fig trees spread their earthy, sweet scents through the air, mingling with the cool wind from the mountains. Each aroma seemed to awaken sleeping memories, feelings I had not known still lived within me. The north of Lebanon was a mosaic of colors, scents and textures that embraced the heart and made the world feel more whole.

I arrived in Dahr El Laysineh, the town where my father was born. At its highest point stood my family's stone house, a century old and steadfast, enduring time as if it had been waiting for me. This was where my father was born and where my grandparents had lived to the end of their days. Today the house stands abandoned, silent, yet filled with stories that permeate the air. At the entrance, a lemon tree gave off its intense fragrance, bringing life and welcome. Fig trees completed the scene, calling up the childhood memories my father had shared: running in the yard, climbing trees with his cousins, walking through the streets and picking figs straight from the tree, holding their simple, pure sweetness in his palm.

As I entered the house, emotion overwhelmed me. I wept silently, letting every corner, every wall, every shadow echo within me. Among the rubble, I found an old cup, covered in dust and memories. I picked it up carefully, as if gathering fragments of myself, and took it with me as a relic of a time I had not lived, yet which somehow belonged to me. My cousin picked up a key lying on the floor, held out his hand and said, firmly and tenderly: "Here. The house is yours."

The view was breathtaking. From up there, green hills met the sky, and the cemetery where my grandfather lay buried appeared in silence, holding stories and memories. The wind stirred leaves and branches, bringing ancient scents and a living freshness. Distant birdsong, rustling trees and the murmur of the wind formed a symphony that seemed to touch the soul directly. The sense of belonging, of being in a place where earth touched sky, was almost tangible.

As we explored the town, my cousins told me about my grandfather, a born leader, the embodiment of dedication and political life in the region. My father recalled his childhood: waking early to find a line of people already at the door, all seeking help. My grandfather had an immense, generous heart. He attended to each person, offering solutions, comfort and support, sparing no effort. He did everything for the community, everything for the people. He left a profound, respected legacy — steadfast leadership, full of wisdom, that crossed generations and shaped the town's history.

There, high in Dahr El Laysineh, I understood that the search for my true self had brought me to that place. The stone house, the key my cousin had handed me, the scent of the lemon tree and figs, the view that seemed to touch the sky — everything whispered that I belonged to that land. Past, present and future met there. The ground, walls and trees held memories, but also quiet promises of new beginnings.

The sun warmed my skin, the roughness of the stones spoke of endurance, and the scent of fruit and flowers filled every breath. Every detail told stories of generations; every space vibrated with the rhythm of earth and wind. Everything seemed suspended in time, eternal and alive at once. For in the end, life always goes on. And I went with it — whole, rooted, awake, certain that among ruins and memories, there is always room to rebuild, to be reborn and to belong.

Before continuing to El Hed, I felt the need to pause within memory and time. I went to the cemetery. It was a moment of deep emotion. As I approached the grave, silent tears rolled down my face, yet I also felt an intense gratitude. I gave thanks for life — for my father's life, for my grandparents' lives, for the ancestors who had passed down stories, roots and strength. Each prayer I whispered seemed to weave an invisible thread between past and present, an intimate encounter with my origins, with the essence that sustains who I am.

At the top of the hill, my gaze rested on the cedar of Lebanon, standing like a guardian of time. I felt the presence of entire generations pulsing in the earth and air. Its deep roots, entwined with the soil, reminded me that true strength is born of patience, inner steadfastness and a legacy spanning generations. Just as that tree faces winds, storms and seasons without losing its grandeur, soul love endures, flourishes and remains whole even when everything around it changes. For a moment, I felt my own story, my ancestors' stories and the strength I carry merge in that silence, in the same cadence of life pulsing through time.

With a full heart, I continued to El Hed. On arrival, I was warmly welcomed by my cousin, the family's matriarch, whose presence inspires both respect and tenderness. My father's first cousin, two years his senior, she embodies the strength and history of our lineage. Beside her, her daughters and other relatives greeted me with embraces, smiles and gazes that spoke of joy, of encounters transcending time and reaffirming life's continuity.

I was immediately struck by the beauty and grandeur of the place. The house stood high on the hillside, overlooking a river winding through the landscape below — a breathtaking view that seemed to embrace the vast olive groves stretching as far as the eye could see. On the balcony, something immediately drew my attention: an ancient tree that had stood there before the house itself. The building had been carefully designed around it, as if the house had been built to honor and protect that imposing life. On the other side of the balcony, a leafy grapevine completed the scene, offering shade, color and a reminder of the flavor of land cultivated with love. Every detail conveyed harmony, belonging and reverence for nature. The scent of basil filled the air.

My cousin personally prepared a feast that reflected both her talent and the abundance of the land. Everything was harvested, produced and prepared there on their self-sufficient property: fresh olives, za'atar and fresh kishk; freshly made shanklish and kibbeh; baked kibbeh with butter and a meat filling; roast lamb; and a variety of salads made with produce from the land. Each dish celebrated care, tradition and generosity, turning simple ingredients into experiences that nourished body and soul. It was a true feast of the earth, where the richness of the soil met the skill and affection of the family, creating moments of deep communion and pleasure.

There, in El Hed, I felt the heartbeat of the family, the matriarch's strength and a deep connection to a tradition spanning generations. Every aroma, every flavor, every gesture told stories of people who preserve their roots and share their generosity. The river view, the vast olive groves, the ancient tree on the balcony and the grapevine beside it brought nature, culture and affection together, making that day unforgettable, fulfilling and significant.

At the end of the day, as the sun began its farewell and shadows lengthened over the hills of El Hed, I felt I had delved deeply into my roots. Every visit, every embrace, every flavor and aroma connected me to the family's living memory, to the strength of the generations before me and to the generosity of the land that sustains us. Amid the stillness of the olive trees, the grandeur of the ancient tree, the breeze from the river and the warmth of the matriarch and my cousins, I understood that this was more than an encounter with people: it was a meeting with my own history, with everything that precedes and defines me. I carried a sense of fullness, of belonging, my heart warmed by memories, laughter and flavors that would remain even after I left. With that fullness and gratitude, I prepared to continue my journey, knowing that the next stage — Byblos — would bring new discoveries, while this richness, this connection to my origins, would remain a firm foundation beneath every step.

CHAPTER 12

BETWEEN STONES AND MEMORIES

I returned to Byblos with a lighter heart, carrying something I had never fully felt before: the certainty of belonging, the quiet strength that springs from our roots and the history of who we are. It was not only Byblos welcoming me; it was all of Lebanon — Dahr El Laysineh, El Hed, Jounieh, Beirut, Batroun and every place I had visited — echoing within me, reminding me that every step, every embrace, every flavor, every scent, every stone I had touched had brought me to this moment.

The city, with its old streets and the scent of the sea, was unchanged, but I was no longer the same. Every corner, every stone of the pier seemed to whisper the lessons I had learned: my grandfather's courage, my cousin's generosity in El Hed, the family's liveliness in Jounieh, Beirut's pulsing energy, Batroun's enchanting history, the vast olive groves, the scent of fresh za'atar, the aroma of Arab coffee. All of Arab cuisine, all the warmth of the Lebanese people formed a map of affection pulsing within me, traced by the blood flowing through my veins — Lebanese blood, strong, resilient and alive.

The past, once heavy, turned into something soft, almost luminous. It carried no pain; it carried memories, stories and echoes that strengthened me. It wasn't weight — it was momentum. The whole of Lebanon — its mountains, valleys, stone houses, rivers and olive trees, the streets and cafes of Beirut and Batroun — had become part of me. Every experience — from the barbecue in Jounieh to the banquet in El Hed, from the sunset at the Raouché Rocks to the aroma of cardamom coffee in Beirut — and every gesture and taste reminded me of the strength of a people who had survived adversity and of the same strength that now dwelt in me.

The sea, which had always been there, seemed different. Its waves were more than witnesses to what had ended; they were guardians of all that could still be lived. Every breath I took in the wind moving between the old

houses reminded me that all the losses, fears and new beginnings had brought me to this moment of clarity, strength and belonging.

Walking through Byblos was like crossing a dream that gave me back to myself. The doors that once seemed closed were now open, illuminated by an unexpected calm. It was life's silent invitation, reminding me that in spite of everything, the world went on — and I could go on with it, whole, steadfast, awake, nourished by the blood that runs in my veins and the courage inherited from my people.

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As I walked through the harbor, I stopped to savor a shawarma, the world's most famous sandwich. Although I had tried it in Brazil, at that moment, there in Byblos, every bite seemed more intense, connected to the scents, sounds and colors of Lebanon around me. Between sea salt and the aroma of spices, I felt even more connected to the streets, the people and my homeland's history.

Every street I walked, every stone I touched, every scent I breathed seemed to hold an ancient secret — memories of stories lived, smiles shared, moments that had transformed my soul. The sea breeze carried more than salt: it brought the feeling that everything was still possible, that there was room for new discoveries and for the woman I had become.

Byblos was more than a city of stone and sea; it was the meeting point of everything I had lived, seen and felt. It was the place where past, present and future aligned in harmony, where all my history, my roots and my courage walked beside me, ready to illuminate what was still to come. Every street, every scent, every stone I touched reminded me that I am Lebanese — through blood, memory, history and the strength pulsing in my veins.

Lebanon had given me courage, belonging, and a deep certainty: even after I left, all that love, all that history, all the land I had traveled through

— from Dahr El Laysineh to El Hed, from Jounieh to Beirut, from Batroun to Byblos — would continue on with me, sustaining every step of the woman I had become.

CHAPTER 13
THE REUNION

The intercom rang. A familiar voice, trembling and restrained, asked if he could come in. I said yes — and in the next instant, time seemed to grow still. When he appeared at the door, silence filled the space between us. For a moment, nothing existed beyond that gaze — intense, true, holding everything time had been unable to erase.

He approached slowly, and I felt my heart recognize a feeling it had never lost. Then we embraced. A simple gesture, yet full. A meeting of souls that, despite distance and uncertainty, still knew the way to each other.

I cried. I cried for the absence, the empty nights, the words never spoken. I also cried for the reunion — the relief of finally feeling his presence, of touching the truth. Throughout those months, I had thought of him. At every dawn, in every silence. I had wondered whether he too had missed me, whether fate would still grant us another chapter. And now, before me, his eyes said everything words could never express.

Our love — that invisible, stubborn thread — was still there, pulsing, serene.

He took a deep breath and, in a choked voice, said:

“I came to ask your forgiveness.”

He paused and went on, earnestly:

“In these five months, not a single day has passed without my thinking of our reunion. I acknowledge my mistakes, the times I ran away, my fears… But I have learned. The difference in our ages has never meant anything. I love you. You are the love of my life. And I want to continue our story.”

Then, hesitantly, he added the reason for his fear:

“I was frightened. I was afraid you might be pregnant… and the risk to your life terrified me. Besides, I do not want to have children yet.”

I smiled lightly and joked:

“Do not worry. When I die and you marry again, you can have children. No problem.”

His words echoed softly, without weight, without promises. Calmly, I said:

“Tomorrow is my last day in Lebanon. In the evening, I'll go to the airport and wait for my flight back to Brazil.”

He looked at me deeply, in silence. Drawing closer, he held my face in his hands and whispered tenderly:

“Maktub.”

The word hung in the air like an ancient breath.

Maktub — “it is written.”

Not as an unchangeable fate, but as something that arrives at the right time, when the heart has learned enough to receive it. It was the acceptance that some stories cannot be explained — they simply happen. They simply are.

And there, in that suspended moment, I felt within me everything life had been trying to show me over the past year: that he was a companion of the soul, not of chance. That his presence restored lightness, awakened my inner strength, my femininity, my sensitivity. He was a living mirror — the kind that reveals rather than wounds. With him, I did not need to be the tireless warrior; I could simply be a woman. And that, for me, was healing.

At the same time, I knew what I meant in his life. I was the strength that steadied him, the woman he admired, the safe harbor that anchored him. A source of maturity, truth and togetherness he had never found before. Our encounter was not only love — it was transformation. Two souls whose paths had crossed so they could grow, mature and put down roots that did not suffocate, but sustained them.

We remained there for long minutes, simply breathing in each other’s presence. A deep calm came over us — the quiet certainty that our meeting had not been chance, that something greater had guided us from the beginning.

Then we opened a bottle of wine. He raised his glass and said, smiling:

“Cheers.”

The ruby liquid reflected the night’s soft light, celebrating our reunion. We talked at length — about the past, our fears, what we had learned, the winding paths that had somehow brought us back. There was no hurry, no demands. Only mutual surrender, emotional intimacy returning with a quiet strength. It was as if the world had shrunk to fit there, in that little space between us.

The warmth of his body beside mine dissolved the months of distance. Every touch was slow, delicate, as if we were rediscovering each other’s contours. Our breaths mingled, our gazes held, and our skin felt every point of contact, every shiver. There was no hurry, only the surrender that longing and the intensity of desire had quietly nurtured. Our bodies spoke without words, saying everything the soul already knew: that we belonged to each other, that time had not erased our connection, that every moment of waiting had been necessary for our reunion to be complete, intense, unforgettable.

Touch became an embrace, the embrace became warmth, and that warmth became absolute closeness — sensual, profound and delicate all at once. Our lips, finally free, met tenderly; hands moved over backs, shoulders and arms, revealing the intimacy that only distance could make more intense. Every sigh, every shiver was a quiet dialogue between our bodies, a celebration of passion, of desire held back for months, and of the joy that, even apart, we had never lost our connection. It was a reunion of hands, lips, hearts and breaths, every gesture reaffirming the strength of love, intimacy and closeness that time had never been able to erase.

That night was neither a goodbye nor an arrival, but a reunion. And so, I understood that some stories do not fall apart. They rest, they change, they mature, and then they resume their course.

There, in the warm silence of that embrace, I realized that life was once again offering us the chance to begin anew — not from nothing, but from a deeper place. A place where love is not effort, but home. As the night drew to a close and prepared to give way to dawn, we remained in each other’s arms, feeling each other’s presence as a quiet shelter. The world could wait; in that room, in the cadence of our shared breathing, there was only the certainty of being together. And for the first time in a long while, I

understood that finding someone again means more than returning to a body: it means recognizing a home in the soul of the one you love.

CHAPTER 14

A LEAP OF THE SOUL

The day dawned clear, and the sky over Lebanon opened like a quiet promise. We sat on the balcony for breakfast: the rich aroma of Arab coffee mingled with fresh bread, za'atar and honey. Every flavor carried the tradition of a land of faith and resilience; every sip awakened the sense of being fully present. Between laughter and easy conversation, he looked at me and asked:

"What would you like to do on your last day in Lebanon?"

I smiled, thinking of the emotion I wanted to feel until the very last moment, and answered:

"I want to visit the shrine in Harissa, then go paragliding."

The ascent to Harissa was peaceful, yet filled with contemplation. Walking between the shrine and the statue of Our Lady of Lebanon, I felt something profoundly powerful. There, in the heart of that sacred place, I thought of my mother, who had passed away. I remembered 2015, when she died, and Pope Francis sent a document recognizing the immeasurable work she had done as a Eucharistic minister. Every Sunday after Mass, she took the consecrated host to the sick and to people in hospitals, bringing comfort and faith to those nearing the end of life. To feel her presence again, even in memory, brought tears of longing, but also of gratitude. Gratitude for the life she had lived, the love she had spread, the example she had left. There, before that sacred image, I felt God's presence come alive and understood that faith, love and care pass through generations.

Then we went paragliding. The cold morning wind touched my face, and every step toward the mountaintop seemed an invitation to freedom. When we finally leaped, the wind enveloped us, and a sense of fullness filled every fiber of body and mind. The world below was vast and intimate at once. The blue sea reflected the sky, villages and hills traced gentle, vivid curves, and Beirut appeared in the distance, small yet pulsing with life. To feel the energy of life and the strength of every choice that had brought us there was indescribable.

At the height of the flight, I could no longer contain my emotion. I shouted with all the strength of my heart:

“Lebanon, I love you! See you soon!”

Adrenaline coursed through me, but there was something more: a lightness of soul, a complete surrender. Every moment, every breath, every glance we exchanged was a ritual of presence, of recognizing the love that joined us. Some experiences reach beyond time, settle into the eternity of being and become eternal through the intensity with which they are lived.

Back at the resort, I packed carefully, each object holding memories and newfound strength. Then he gave me a necklace with my name in Arabic. A gift full of meaning.

“A keepsake,” he said tenderly.

That gesture expressed the love that united us, the attention to detail and the quiet closeness we had built. I learned that true love is not only emotion, but presence, care and reverence for the other person’s soul.

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When night fell over Byblos, we left the resort for the airport. The streets, now quiet and lit only by streetlights, passed slowly before us. The air carried the freshness of the sea. A comfortable silence filled the car, holding the day’s memories — the paragliding flight, the visit to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon, the energy and intimacy we had shared. Every kilometer seemed to prolong the moment, as if the road were allowing us to savor each other’s presence a little longer before the inevitable farewell. The lights were reflected in his eyes, and our exchanged glances held tenderness, closeness and the certainty that what we had lived that day would remain alive, even when fate separated us at the airport.

At the airport in Beirut, our gazes met again, full of emotion and quiet promises. Time seemed to slow; every gesture, every breath held weight

and meaning. He embraced me firmly and tenderly, surrounding me with a warmth that seemed to want to shield me from all the distance to come. Almost against my ear, he whispered:

"I'll be waiting for you to come back."

I remained silent. No words left my lips, but my heart answered. Emotion tightened in my throat, my eyes filled with tears, and I felt warmth and emptiness, longing and hope. It was a profound moment, holding everything we had lived — yet still full of mystery about what would come next. I simply sighed, allowing his embrace and his words to settle within me, like an echo that would remain forever.

I held his hands, slow to let go, feeling the texture of his skin, the rhythm of his heart — a connection no time or distance could erase. And at that moment, although I knew the early hours would take me away, I felt that everything we had lived in that reunion would remain alive within us, an invisible thread joining us beyond space and time.

With tearful eyes, we held each other a little longer, as if wishing to stop time. Our hands slowly parted, but his warmth and presence remained with me. We exchanged one last deep look, holding everything we felt, and I took a deep breath. Then, with a heavy heart, I walked toward the boarding gate, every step marked by the echo of the silence between us and the certainty that our bond, even across distance, would continue to guide us.

As the plane climbed, Beirut revealed itself as a carpet of endless lights, reflecting the sea and the vastness of night. Each light seemed to pulse with the energy of what we had lived — moments of surrender, courage, intensity and full presence. I felt the strength of my Lebanese blood, the deep faith of a resilient people, the devotion spanning centuries and the certainty that God, in his immense wisdom, guides every step. The vastness below and around me reminded me that life is far greater than we imagine, and that every moment lived truthfully is a leap of the soul.

Nothing had been defined. Nothing had been promised. Nothing had been planned. Yet there was faith — in God, in life, and in the invisible force joining us to the moments that truly matter. Every breath, every glance, every shared touch held the intensity of all we had been, all we had lived. Serenity filled my heart, along with the certainty that everything in

life happens as it should, at the time prepared by our Creator. And so it had been up to that moment. And so it was written. Maktub.

EPILOGUE
THE ESSENCE OF LOVE

Time passes, but certain memories remain alive — like the wind that always blows over the sea of Byblos.

Lebanon remained within me. Its mountains and coastline, its ancient cities filled with stories, had become part of who I am.

As I remembered my grandfather's stone house, I felt the full strength of a legacy spanning generations. My grandfather, the town's baladi, a man of great authority and deep humility, had put down roots that still sustain my story today. At eighteen, my father crossed the sea to Brazil, carrying dreams, courage and determination — and my Brazilian mother, with her faith and dedication, completed that story, carrying forward the love and strength now living within me. Returning to the land of my origins, I felt life's cycle, the continuity of the strong, resilient blood pulsing in my veins.

I learned that true love reaches beyond physical encounter, beyond daily presence. It is soul love — a quiet fusion of stories, memories, courage and closeness — enduring time, distance and adversity. It pulses in patient waiting, in treasured memories, in sincere forgiveness, in the intensity of reunions.

That paragliding flight in Harissa was more than a flight — it was a symbol. The wind, the sea, Beirut in the distance, the colors of sky and earth mingling before our eyes: everything reminded me that life is made of moments that must be lived fully. I felt the strength of the wind, the sun's embrace, the measured rhythm of the waves — everything seemed to whisper:

"Some paths always cross. Some stories are never lost."

Even separated by time and distance, we carry within us the certainty that some bonds cannot be broken. They remain like deep, invisible, unbreakable roots — sustaining us, guiding us and reminding us that there is always room for new beginnings, reunions and shared eternities.

Lebanon, my grandfather's stone house, the sea, the wind and the sky remained with me. The blood, courage and faith that have crossed

generations now live within me, mingled with the experience of soul love, which turns encounters into eternity. In the silence of memory, soul and heart, I discovered that true love never leaves — it remains, eternal and invisible, a constant murmur, a light that never goes out, a promise that crosses time.

And there, among the mountains, the coast and the north of Lebanon, I felt the presence of all who had come before me — my grandparents, my father, my entire Lebanese family — as if the land itself were whispering stories of courage, faith and love. Every stone, every tree, every wave seemed to carry memories intertwining with my own life, reminding me that everything we experience has meaning, a continuity that transcends generations.

Lebanon restored my awareness of who I am, what I carry and what I can offer the world. I learned that love and life are lived intensely, that fullness is born of surrender, and that every choice, every moment, every gesture made with truth becomes eternal in the heart.

And so it has been up to this moment. And so it was written. Maktub.

CONTENTS

Copyright

Dedication

Acknowledgments

Epigraph

When Souls Recognize One Another

Preface

Chapter 1 — The Silence And The Flight

Chapter 2 — A New Awakening And The Night At Saint Charbel

Chapter 3 — Dawn In Byblos

Chapter 4 — A Soul Connection

Chapter 5 — A Snow Day In Laklouk

Chapter 6 — From Snow To Sea

Chapter 7 — The Peace Within Us

Chapter 8 — Lebanon, My Refuge: Batroun And Arnaoon Village

Chapter 9 — The Weight Of The World: From The Locanda To Palms The Legend

Chapter 10 — Life Moves On: From Jounieh To Beirut And The Fortress Of The Raouché Rocks

Chapter 11 — A Return To My Roots: Dahr El Laysineh And El Hed

Chapter 12 — Between Stones And Memories

Chapter 13 — The Reunion

Chapter 14 — A Leap Of The Soul

Epilogue — The Essence of Love

About the Author

Synopsis

Tribute to My Father

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jamila Abrão is a Brazilian writer with Lebanese roots. The daughter of a Lebanese father, she holds a bachelor's degree in law. Her background spans federal public service and union leadership. She transforms experiences, emotions and memories into words that touch the soul.

Based in Lebanon, her writing grows out of attentive listening, the intensity of feeling and a sensitivity to the invisible. In Soul Love, her debut novel, she reveals humanity in all its fullness, turning pain, experience and vulnerability into learning, beauty and profound reflection.

SYNOPSIS

A Brazilian woman of dual nationality travels to Lebanon in January 2021 in search of her essence and her roots. The daughter of a Lebanese father and the granddaughter of a baladi, she journeys through historic cities and the northern region of the country — Akkar — including the town where her father was born, Dahr El Laysineh, and the town where her relatives live, El Hed.

Amid villages, mountains, and sacred places such as the Monastery of Saint Charbel and the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in Harissa, as well as landscapes of rare beauty, such as the snow-covered mountains of Laklouk, she becomes enchanted by the country's rich cultural heritage. The aromas, flavors, and traditions of Arab cuisine leave an indelible impression, etched deeply into her senses and memory. She also experiences moments of profound emotion, such as a paragliding flight over Harissa, an experience that comes to symbolize freedom and a sense of wholeness.

She then delves into her family's history and discovers the strength of a legacy that has endured across generations, awakening within her the courage, faith, and resilience that flow through her veins.

Although their lives had already been connected from afar, it was at this fateful moment that she finally met him in person — a younger Lebanese man grieving the profound loss of his father, who had been murdered at the very moment their paths crossed. Their encounter is intense, transformative, and charged with emotions that defy time, distance, and prejudice, revealing a connection that transcends expectations and social conventions.

Through journeys across historic cities, shared flavors and aromas, and moments of profound introspection, the protagonist discovers that true love reaches far beyond physical presence. It pulses quietly yet unwaveringly through forgiveness, surrender, and the intensity of every reunion. Every gesture, every glance, every experience they share becomes part of an invisible bond, forever etched into the soul.

At the end of the story, as she returns to Brazil, a certainty takes root: some encounters are inevitable — as though written along the

invisible lines of destiny.

Maktub.

Soul Love is a novel about courage, belonging, and transformation; about the strength of bonds that withstand pain, distance, and time. It is a reminder that our true essence will always find its way, and that soulful love is eternal, invisible, and capable of illuminating lives forever.

TRIBUTE TO MY FATHER



To my father, Abrão Jacob Miguel —
the strength behind my smile,
the foundation of my path.
Through your example, I learned
the value of courage, of faith,
and of love that never gives up.