

the **WITNESS** series

Angeliki AND THE SHIPWRECK



Josh Hardin

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the **WITNESS** series

The **Witness Series** is a collection of books based on biblical stories but told through the eyes of a fictional character who might have been present at a particular event. The character who witnesses each story is a young person, usually between the ages of eight and seventeen.

I took great pains to be sure that the story in your hand does not change **any details** that are included in the Bible. Since many of the characters in this story are fictional, there will be some elements, especially dialogue, that are not included in the Bible. However, these should in **no way** contradict what the Bible says. If they do, it is unintended. So always remember that the story happened the way God says it happened in the Bible.

The series has this thought at its foundation: “Suppose that we could hear this Bible story from the eyes of a young person who saw it firsthand, who was there when it happened.” Each of the stories in this series will be based on that idea.

—Josh Hardin





Angeliki AND THE SHIPWRECK

In this story, we will read the story of Paul's shipwreck to Rome through the eyes of a young girl traveling with her family on the same boat. How did it feel to travel on a ship full of Roman soldiers and prisoners? Where could a young lady turn when she had no power to control not only how her family traveled nor where they went, but also when even the wind and waves turned against them? How would she feel when there was no sun for days? When the ship seemed at any moment to plunge into the depths of the sea? When all hope was lost? What was it like speaking with Paul when he and his friends had no fear? Where would she, powerless to do anything to save herself or her family, turn for hope and salvation?





Chapter 1

The crisp blue of the Mediterranean Sea, the bright sun in the sky, the fresh smell of the breeze off of the water—none of it fooled Angeliki. She stood at the end of the pier, but it felt like the end of her life. She could see the dark clouds gathering, way out on the horizon. Only a spot now, a tiny blemish almost unnoticed in the surrounding beauty, but it felt poised to pounce and devour everything. The storm was coming, just like the storms in her life had come so unexpectedly. To remind her, the wind whipped at her suddenly, just for a second, but irresistible. She took a step back to brace herself. The wind, unable to knock her down, grabbed her red scarf and jerked it from her head. Angeliki gasped and caught it, just barely, and her dark hair blew out behind her. Just as suddenly, the wind stopped. Her hair fell down across her shoulders.

“Isn’t it lovely?” Angeliki’s mother, Rhoxana, breathed deeply through her nose, smelling the salt air.

“*Mitera*,” said Angeliki, “I don’t want to go to Rome.”

Her mother took the scarf and tied it around Angeliki’s head, bringing her hair back into order.

“You should say, ‘*Mater*,’” said her mother. “Your father wants you to begin speaking Latin, not Greek. In Rome they speak Latin.”

“I don’t want to speak Latin. I want to speak Greek,” insisted Angeliki. “Father says I have an accent when I speak Latin.”

“All the more reason to practice,” said Rhoxana as she stepped back to look at her daughter. “There,” she said, pleased with her work. “You have such beautiful hair.” She stroked one of the long tresses that reached out from under the scarf.

The large ship floated at anchor next to the pier, creaking as it floated up and down on the gentle waves. Sailors and workmen tramped back and forth, on board and back off again, carrying sacks of grain over their shoulders for loading into the hold. Eventually the grain and other cargo would be sold in the markets of Rome. Angeliki watched them with dread. She turned to her mother.

“Mother, do we have to go?” she insisted. “I heard the sailors say that sailing is dangerous now. It’s almost storm season, when traveling on the Mediterranean is impossible because of the wind. Couldn’t we wait until next year, after the storm season passes?”

“It isn’t storm season yet,” said her mother, “and your father has been called to Rome.” Her mother sighed again, smiling, her eyes seeing something far away. “It’s a big advancement for him, so we can’t wait. You know Rome doesn’t wait.”

“Can I stay here?” asked Angeliki. “I could stay with grandmother. She has room.”

“Is that what this is about?” her mother replied. “Leaving your grandmother?”

Angeliki wanted to say, “Yes!” Yes, leaving grandmother. And her friends. And everything she had ever known. Her whole life had been spent in Colosse, the daughter of an official Roman interpreter—a good life, an easy life, with plenty of food and clothes and friends. And now they were leaving it all behind. Why?

She remembered hugging her grandmother goodbye, just before she and her family left Colosse and began the journey to this port town of Myra, the last stop before boarding the ship. After that, the sea would become an inseparable

barrier between Angeliki and everything she'd ever known and loved. Angeliki knew she would never see her grandmother again. She touched her scarf—an expensive parting gift from her grandmother. Tears welled in her eyes.

But Angeliki didn't speak. She'd already said these things, and both her father and mother had said they were leaving anyway, because it was an advancement for him. "For our entire family," her father had said. "Besides, I can't tell Rome, 'no.' So we have to go."

Rome! The city so powerful that it ruled the world. Rome could do anything. Order this, order that, and people had to do it. No choice. Now she and her family were going to that very city. Angeliki felt as though she were going to prison. Was there anything Rome couldn't order and it be done? Probably, Rome could even order the winter storms to wait, just so her father could get to Rome on time.

When Angeliki didn't reply, her mother stepped beside her and put an arm around her daughter's shoulders. She pointed out to sea. "I know you don't want to go, to leave these things behind. But think of what is in front of you. Think of the future you'll have! So many opportunities! The gods have certainly been good to you."

"Mother," she said, "I'm afraid."

“My little Angeliki,” sighed her mother, “always afraid. Why not be like your brother? He’s looking forward to the trip!”

Angeliki watched her brother Aeolus splash and dive in the water below the pier. At ten years old, he was a storm all by himself, named after the keeper of winds. Of course he would look forward to the trip. He could cause trouble anywhere, especially on a ship. He was always allowed to do whatever he wanted. Angeliki, however, was always being told what to do. She was fourteen now. Shouldn’t she have more control over her life? Yet it seemed she had less and less control over anything.

“Stand back! Make way!” A Roman centurion called out to them, waving his arm. Rhoxana pulled her daughter to safety at the side of the pier. The centurion stopped in front of them, then turned his back to them as he directed a string of men onto the ship. The men marched past, their feet ringing on the wooden dock. They turned as they reached the centurion and marched up the gangplank and onto the deck.

The first few men were Roman soldiers, easily recognized by their armor and the Roman short sword, the gladius, belted on each waist. After the soldiers trudged another string of men, following slowly behind. Angeliki noticed that the mens’

clothes clung to them like cobwebs, torn and patched and tattered. Each wore shackles on his wrists. Her eyes widened as she realized they were all prisoners, boarding the ship on which she would sail to Rome. Were prisoners going to sail with them? Why were they here? What had these men done that they would be shipped to Rome in shackles? Her eyes turned to the centurion standing before her, his armor glinting in the sun. Though none of the prisoners made a move to challenge his authority, still the centurion stood with one hand on his sword, a warning against any sort of rebellion.

Rhoxana held tight, her arms across her daughter's chest in protection. Angeliki tilted her head to see the worry in her mother's eyes. Then she turned to study the prisoners. How many were there? They seemed to keep coming. One walked behind the next, their heads down. None of the prisoners looked back at her. None, that is, until the last man—a short, hunched man, whose body appeared to have been beaten down many times and had never quite grown straight again. What had this one done to have been treated so badly? Yet even then, he carried himself differently, upright though hunched, his eyes ahead, as though the shackles made no difference to him. Next to him walked another man, tall and unshackled, who seemed to be accompanying the prisoner. He carried a bag and also scrolls wrapped in leather.

As this prisoner passed, his eyes turned to look straight into Angeliki's. She gasped, but the man kept walking up and into the ship. What had she seen there? It wasn't fear. It wasn't hate. It wasn't anger. It was something else. Something powerful. What did it mean?



After the last prisoner boarded, the remaining soldiers followed. Right behind the soldiers, Angeliki's father trotted toward her, trailed by the servants loading the last of the family luggage and food on board.

“Nereus,” Rhoxana called to her husband.

“They’re putting prisoners on board!”

“I know, dear, I know,” said Nereus, half listening to his wife as he monitored the servants to make certain that all was loaded.

“But they can’t do that!” exclaimed Rhoxana. “We can’t be expected to travel with prisoners.”

“We’ll have to, carus,” he said. Angeliki noticed that her father was using Latin now, calling Rhoxana by the Latin word carus for “beloved.” “We have no choice,” he continued.

“Can’t they find another ship?” she pleaded. “We won’t be safe!” She leaned in and whispered, but still loud enough for the centurion to hear, “Tell him you’re on official business, called to Rome by Caesar.”

At this the centurion turned a stern gaze on the couple. Nereus saw it and quickly quieted his wife. He and the centurion had already had this discussion.

“Yes, dear, he knows. But there are no other ships, not for us nor for them. Rome has declared Mare Clausum, the closed sea, for the winter storms. This ship is only able to travel because it carries grain to Rome, so we’ll have to make do.” He pointed to the centurion. “But good Julius here

has assured me the prisoners will be no trouble. We'll be perfectly safe."

In response, Julius tightened his jaw, then spoke. "You'd better get on board, interpreter. We've wasted enough time already. The gods won't hold the winds forever." He held his arm out, pointing up the plank onto the deck. The time for discussion had passed.

Rhoxana shuddered, then turned and called out to Aeolus to come on board or he would be left.

Angeliki's brother burst from the water and ran for the ship. He didn't stop running until he leapt on deck. Angeliki followed, her eyes turning from the stone gaze of the centurion to the deck of the ship. She knew storms were coming. Now she would travel with Roman soldiers and prisoners. She felt like a prisoner herself. Things were already growing worse.

