

# TENEBRA LUX

*Vol I*  
*Inner Passage*

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*Inner Passage*

*To Know Ourselves as Different*

  
**PROTALÓS**

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## To Know Ourselves as Different

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as the sailors mockingly called it— was the only place on the Tenebra  
where the wind didn’t reach.*

*It was a small, half-hidden nook at the back of the upper deck,  
nestled among ropes, crates, and scraps of canvas.*

*The name had started as a joke, a place where softer souls or  
secret conversations gathered—but over time, the name stuck,  
and so did the silences it sheltered.*

*There, the world seemed to stand still.*

*As if the whole ship could keep sailing on,  
and that corner would float apart, untouched.*



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## *To Know Ourselves as Different*

**El Rincón de las Mozas** —“The Maidens’ Corner,” as the sailors mockingly called it— was the only place on the *Tenebra* where the wind didn’t reach.

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Lauren and Nicolau sat there. Face to face. In silence, at first.

“We’ve only known each other for a few months, Nicolau... but sometimes it feels like forever,” said Lauren, leaning back against the railing of the *Tenebra*.

“We both come from the same part of hell, it seems. What you’ve told me... what you haven’t. We went through the same things, just in different ways. Maybe that’s why we understand each other.”

“It’s true. And honestly... I don’t know what would be happening to me here without your friendship, Lauren.

You seem to have everything more clear, more defined. I, on the other hand... still feel like I haven’t finished running from myself.

And I’m not talking about this voyage to the New World anymore.

Here, on this ship, I’ve come to understand that not everything changes just because the map does.

There’s something still holding me back. Old guilt. Fear. Shame.

Something I haven’t been able to shake.”

“You’re wrong, friend. I don’t have it more figured out.

We’re just different.

Each of us fights their own war the best way they can.

I fall too. And I get back up.”

Lauren looked down and ran her fingers along the edge of her tight white trousers. Then, more quietly, she went on:

“But I’ve learned something. When I’m honest with myself... when I stop hiding what I feel, things begin to fall into place.

That’s why I made two decisions.

The first was to accept how I look—and how I want to be seen.

This clothing isn’t a disguise. It’s how I say: *this is who I am*.

I’m not a woman, you know that. I never will be, nor do I pretend to be.

But yes, I am **female**. Yes, I am **feminine**. And I want to stand in that place before men.”

Nicolau listened in silence. The sea was calm.

“And the second thing I did,” Lauren continued, “was to accept what others saw in me.

I accepted the way Buko, Thami and Zuberi looked at me.

I accepted their desire... and also their respect.

I didn’t care where they came from, or what language they spoke, or how many they were.

I didn’t care how much I had to learn, or how my body would need to adapt to meet them.

I simply gave myself over to it—sincerely.

I stopped resisting. And in that surrender... I found freedom.



It's not easy. As you can imagine, pleasing three men isn't simple.  
But it's worth it. What they give back... makes it worth the effort."

Nicolau took a deep breath.

"You're amazing, Lauren. I admire you so much...  
What you say is what I'm trying to learn from you.  
To accept my place. To stop fighting the inevitable.  
To recognize that yes... I'm female too.  
That I want to be seen that way.  
And maybe, just maybe... I can stop hiding."

He paused, lowering his voice.

"I'm afraid of giving myself to Wolsey. You know that.  
Not because of his size... I'll adapt. I even crave it now.  
My body... asks for it more and more each day."

"Then what are you afraid of?"

"I'm afraid it's just an illusion.  
That he only desires me because there are no women on this ship.  
I'm afraid I'm confusing my feelings... and I'll end up used again.  
That once more, giving myself will mean being betrayed."

Lauren leaned in gently, her eyes soft.

"Your fears are valid, Nicolau.  
But the only way to know... is to live it.  
No one can promise you it won't hurt.  
But you *do* know what you feel.  
You know what you want.  
And I think it's time you stopped punishing yourself for that."

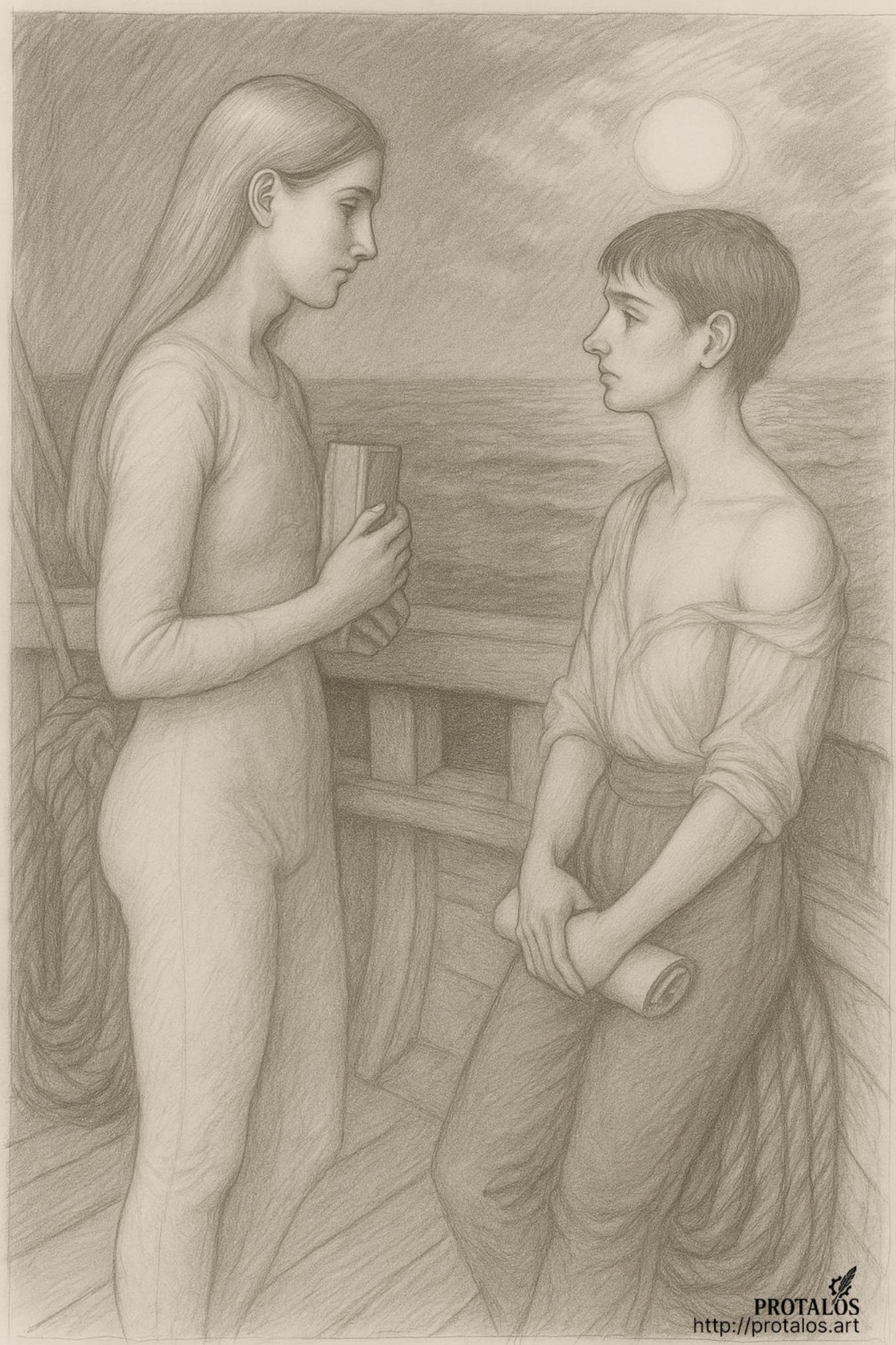
She was quiet for a moment, then said:

"Make your best offering. The costliest one. The most complete.  
You already know it might hurt... but you have to give everything.  
And I swear... no man could resist someone willing to become what you already are:  
young, beautiful, hungry... and unafraid."

"Lauren..."

"You've known it from the first day.  
There isn't a single sailor on the Tenebra who hasn't desired you.  
But you've already chosen who to give yourself to.  
So dress for him.  
Let yourself go. No holding back."

"Let your little figures —Nyra, Elpis— guide you.  
And let destiny decide for us."



*Each word in these pages was forged in the womb of thought,  
by the bodiless hand known as PROTALOS.  
It lives, and it fights.*

  
**PROTALOS**

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