

An excerpt from *Lost Voices*:

The boat was speeding up now and the mermaids' song flowed over the sky until every breath of air, every grain of sunlight, was awake and alive. Luce felt the song streaming over and inside her body, and then she heard a single high, tremulous note soaring up above the curls of music. It tore from her chest and peaked somewhere just under the sun, floated there, and then began a long, tumbling descent. The young sailor's sleepy love changed, heightened into a fever of longing. The song entered into his mind, and Luce suddenly understood him. Her quivering song felt his thoughts, and it told her how heartbroken he'd been since his mother's death. They'd been fighting, and he hadn't gone to see her in the hospital as cancer ate through her; he'd stayed away, until it was too late.

She had promised she wouldn't sing, Luce reminded herself. She could still lift her tail up into the sunlight and hold it there until the burning forced her voice to stop. But even then the ship would smash apart. Everyone on it was already doomed. And she couldn't let the young sailor die, Luce thought, with so much grief still inside him. Her song fell and the note split into a widening chord, and then the young sailor knew that, even as she died, his mother had forgiven him. She'd thought of him with the purest compassion, with gratitude for the years of joy he'd brought to her life.

At least, that was what Luce's song told him. It vibrated with a sense of perfect homecoming, and as Luce sang to him everything broken was mended, and everything lost was restored.