The smell hit me before I even saw the ferry, fried shallots, grilled satay, something sweet like pandan and coconut drifting through the air at HarbourFront. It was that perfect kind of too-early morning when the food smells stronger and your stomach's louder. I grabbed a kopi and kaya toast from a corner stall and wandered toward the boarding gate, still chewing as I handed over my ticket.

The ferry, *Ocean Breeze 5*, was the usual one. I’d taken it more times than I could count, quick, quiet, mostly uneventful. I found my seat by the window, plugged in my earphones, and settled in. The sky was a hazy gray, the sea flat and metallic. Everything screamed *typical*.

We left the dock smoothly. The engines hummed low. A toddler somewhere behind me was singing to herself. Across the aisle, an auntie was already nodding off with her arms folded. It was peaceful. Predictable.

Then something changed.

About twenty minutes in, the ferry dipped forward, just slightly, like someone had tapped the brakes. It wasn’t violent, but it was enough to make my coffee slosh and my ears perk up. A second later, we banked left, too sharply. Heads turned. A few people sat up straight. I caught the eye of a guy two rows ahead who looked just as confused as I felt.

The captain’s voice came over the speaker:
We are adjusting the course. Please remain seated.

That was when the rocking became harder, enough to jolt a few passengers from their drowsiness. The toddler’s singing had stopped. I could feel the unease settling like mist, quiet, creeping. A few people were glancing around, trying to assess if they should be worried.

The captain’s voice returned, calm but clipped:
“We are adjusting our course due to unexpected currents. Please remain seated.”

I looked out the window. The sea still looked calm, but the ferry was clearly veering off its usual line. The ship made a sharp tilt.

Another tilt. This one sharper. My coffee cup slid a few centimetres on the tray.

Now more passengers were sitting up. A couple of them whispered to each other. One man stood and was told to sit back down by a crew member moving quickly down the aisle, polite but firm. There were no answers, just tight smiles

I checked my phone. No signal. Not unusual this far out, but still. I noticed the guy two rows ahead again. He wasn’t looking around anymore. He was staring straight ahead, face unreadable, hands gripping the seat in front of him.

Outside, the coastline was gone. Nothing but water now, stretching out in every direction, blurred by the low, grey sky.