

— *Stories of Supernatural Encounters* —

Fruitful E. John

FIRE IN MY BONES

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Book Design By: GospelBreed

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CHAPTER ONE**BAPTISM OF FIRE**

“And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. (John 20:22).”

The sermon was reaching a climax. Apostle closed his big bible upon his manuscript and leaned on the pulpit, looking down at the pew.

“A life without the Holy Ghost is lively purposeless and a purposeless life is powerfully dead.” he said as he summarized his sermon. My ears tinkled and the words sank deep into my heart..

“God, Is that me? Is that my condition?”

“Yes!” my mind replied.

It seemed that my eyes were widening as I stared into the air. The more I tried to excuse my thoughts, the more loudly the words rang in my ears. I saw a vision of myself in front of me, sitting down with a frustrated look as I flipped through the pages of the bible.

Then I remembered, how my spiritual life had been. How I opened my devotional and bible every day like it was some compulsory lecture note to be read with no understanding at all. Just when I was about to connect the dots, I saw myself kneeling down with my head laid on a plastic chair snoring heavily.

“Lord. What is this?” I asked myself.

“Ishkato skata lebroshiiii...”

“Huh!” I shuddered back to reality.

My dad will tear me apart if he knew I attended a meeting with these ‘speaking in tongues’ people. I thought and looked back towards the entrance.

My head told me to stand up and go home. Just when I was about to give in, he dropped another bomb shell.

“A life without the Holy Ghost is dead to the ultimate purposes of God. Such a life cannot comprehend or gain relevance in God’s agenda. Stop it! Stop living as if the Holy Ghost is not a necessity. He is.”

Was I the only one in this meeting? Why was I feeling like the man of God was describing my life? Although I grew up in a church that preaches the Holy Ghost as a gift of the Holy Spirit, they never preached it like it was a necessity. There was nothing supernatural about the way it was preached and I didn’t have any of these feelings in any of the teachings. Speaking in tongues? It was not allowed in my church. And my dad speaks ill of it at any given opportunity.

“God! I just hope this is not heresy.” My mind whispered.

“Except of course if you have no desire to leave a footprint in the sand of time.” He continued.

“And if that is the case, you certainly do not have a desire to make Heaven. For how can you live without obeying the command to be a light in the world and make heaven?”

“Hmmm... so you too have heaven in view?” I thought.

“Some people want ice cream Christianity, cold but nice. They want their churches to be like museums. But the church is not a freeze box. It is the Father’s house. The Holy Spirit warms us up for the Father’s house.”

Now, that describes my church. The last time someone attempted to lead a prayer in a charismatic way? He was warned and sanctioned publicly.

Then came the statement that ignited my uncontrollable hunger.

“The Holy Spirit’s empowerment is intended to be the normal way Christians function. Therefore, it is abnormal not to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is not the will of God at all!”

“If you want this experience, it is time to ask for it.”

I jumped to my feet before anyone else could.

If there was anything called the Holy Ghost baptism, it must happen to me today.

Even if I had to pass the night in this hall all alone, I would.

I remembered the two pictures of myself I saw earlier during the sermon and my desperation heightened. No more dozing off during prayers. No! No more reading the bible like a story book. No more boring Christianity. No more religious frustrations. If there was any time to experience God, it was now and nothing was going to stop me.

“Lord! I’m tired. I’m tired of boring Christianity. I’m tired of been cold. I’m tired of been normal. Set me on fire for you Lord. Baptize me with your Holy Spirit. I want to burn!” I screamed not minding what the persons behind me would think.

“Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” I heard Apostle Salimon shout and my body lost control.

When I gained partial consciousness, my body had not recovered from the current. I rolled uncontrollably on the floor hitting my body against the scattered plastic chairs.

I was on the floor with other bodies for the next ten minutes, trying at intervals to understand fully what had just happened to me.

CHAPTER TWO**SOAKED**


“But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you...” (Acts 1:8)

“Peace... I speak peace.” I heard a feminine voice say and my body calmed. I looked up and saw her. Was I seeing well? Sister Lydia? What in the world was she doing here?

She begged for a hand from one of the sisters to help me up. It was then I saw the usher’s tag on her neck.

The meeting had come to an end for more than thirty minutes now. Yet, the groanings of young boys and girls on the floor had not ceased. At eighteen, this was the strangest thing I had ever witnessed. I see people fall down in churches on TV stations and I had always wondered what that was. “Why do they fall?” I had always queried in my mind. Now the question was “Why did I fall?”

“Esther, do stay back for counselling.” Sister Lydia whispered into my ears.



I checked my time to be sure that would be possible. It was few minutes past six. Mum and dad would be on their way back from the Saturday elder's meeting and it would take me at least fifteen minutes to get back home even if I took a taxi.

"I'm not sure I can." I looked up to her and whispered back shaking my head. The last thing I wanted was to answer queries. First, it would be "why did tutorials take you too long today?" I wouldn't want to lie. Then it would be "why would you attend a youth program outside our church without asking permission from us?"

The thought of what answer I would give to those questions sent shivers down my spine. I hadn't plan to attend the program. I was on my way home when I saw the big banner in front of the big cathedral beside my school. I couldn't take my eyes off it so I found myself walking towards the entrance of the cathedral.

For my parents, I know that explanation would not suffice. Mum would nag me to tears and dad would be so angry.

I tried to stand up and fell back into the chair.

“I’m afraid Esther, you have to be patient with yourself. You are soaked.”

My heart skipped a beat. Not now. I can’t be stained. My head raced back and forth then I remembered seeing my period the previous week. Did it become irregular? I sat still hoping that she’ll return with a wrapper or something.

After about ten minutes, she walked back to my side and said “I think we are ready to go home now.”

“The stain?” I asked.

“Oh No! I didn’t mean you were... I was actually referring to being soaked with power.”

Whatever that meant, I didn’t know. However, it brought me relief that I wasn’t stained. This time standing was easier. She saw me to the park and requested that we catch up after Sunday service the following day.

Sister Lydia had always been a nice fellow. She used to be one of the youths instructors in our church before she gained admission. Most youths loved and looked up to her. Now I see why she's so different. Maybe I'll soon become like her. The thought of that gave me hope.

My elder brother opened the door for me. I greeted hurriedly and found my way to the kitchen to do the dishes. That was the first thing that could catch mum's attention and generate queries. I tried to take my mind off the dream I had when I fell at the cathedral but I couldn't. My heart bubbled with joy and such peace that I didn't know when I finished washing the dishes.

I walked back to the living room and there was my brother, James sitting on the couch and staring into space, his two arms locked into each other, with a countenance like that of a hungry lion ready to devour its prey.

"Big bros. Are you okay?" I asked.

He didn't say a word. I tried to move closer and he roared.

"Don't come near me!"

“But why? Are you angry I didn’t come back early to cook? There’s food in the oven.” I said and He went dumb again.

I knew James had terrible anger issues.

“When he’s angry, just go to your room and lock yourself in there till we’re home.” Dad had instructed me last month. That day, we were only arguing about the Jamb score for admission into his school, when he disconnected the TV plug from the wall and smashed it on the ground.

Remembering dad’s advice, I took a U-turn into my room and locked the door. I decided to thank God for how the day went. If not for anything, for this sweet experience that has filled my heart with so much joy. I opened my mouth and closed it almost immediately. I opened it again.

“Thank you Fada---shimaskata – lekish -- brazo – maleikishrataskibo...” I stopped.

“What gibberish am I saying?” my head asked.

“Your prayer language.” My mind replied.

Just then, I began to hear different sounds.

“Gbash... Gbo... Gba... sfewww...”

“Oh no! It can’t be what I’m thinking.”

I stood up and moved swiftly to my door. Peeping through the door hole, my jaw dropped. The books from the book stand were scattered all over the floor. He picked up the harmer on the edge of the window and was about hitting the flat screened TV on the wall.

“What are you doing James?” I asked immediately I opened the door. He stopped and looked my way with such hatred and vigor. Then it dawned on me what I had just done. What if he throws the hammer at me? What was I thinking opening the door when mum and dad wasn't back?

Fear gripped me and I literally shivered. I wanted to run back into my room. But the thought of him hitting me from the back didn't let me. I heard some gibberish in my mind and I gave in.

"Emanskato lebrahsphata..."

These time the words came out fluently and I spoke them out loudly. Whatever that was, it worked fine. He dropped the hammer and sat down on the floor maintaining strong eye contact.

"Holy Spirit have your way." I said softly and he hit the tiled floor with the back of his head. He was in that position for more than fifteen minutes. I continued praying and speaking in tongues as I arranged the room. Few minutes after he stood up, mum and dad arrived. He refused to say anything to them. I didn't either.

The night passed smoothly, except that my eyes and my mum's met every now and then during the night devotion. Apparently, she must have been surprised that I was not just awake, I was fully alive, saying the prayers with all enthusiasm. Indeed, a change had come. I could never be the same again.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MANDATE

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound..." (Isaiah 61:1)

Resting my back on the foam I call bed was a soothing way to relax after a hectic day. The 'Youths on Fire' conference was a massive success. Young boys and girls caught the fire, even Esther, Pastor John's daughter did not escape it. Hers was a deliverance plus series of encounters.

"God must have great things in store for that girl." I thought and became sober immediately.

"But Me, Lord, what do you have in store for me?"

That question expressed the concern I had for myself as the youth conference drew to a close. I had prayed and fasted throughout the week, trusting that God would encounter me at the program. But there I was, with no evidence of a divine touch, helping to carry young boys and girls under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

"Lydia, God knows best." I consoled myself.

"Lydia, Lydia...dinner is served..." Mum shouted from the sitting room and I buried my head beneath the pillow. My eyes were heavy. Food could wait. The sleep was more urgent.

* * * * *

"Help! Help! Help!" A solid male voice screamed.

"My mum kept me here..." A tiny female voice said, sounding like she was weeping.

"I don't know why I'm here?" Another male voice said with confusion in his voice.

"This place is too dark, I can feel the darkness." That sounded like a female voice too.

"I'm tired of myself..." Another female voice said.

I looked left and right hoping to find the bodies that owned the voices I was hearing. All I saw were bushes - thick bushes. I looked forward and saw a clear pathway with no end. I felt a presence behind me. I turned back and I saw him.

Dressed in what could be described as white but whiter than anything I had ever seen. His eyes shone with such brightness I could feel them piercing through my soul and spirit. His presence overwhelmed me and I fell. Then I felt a hand touched me and raised me up.

"Young souls are perishing in the forest of life." He said, His voice echoing like the sound of many waters. I tried to go down on my knees for fear of the heaviness of his voice but I couldn't. My knees were straightened, yet fear engulfed me.

"Particularly in your fireproofed church." He said and I shook the more.

"You have the mandate to liberate these ones. I have invested and will still invest in you. You must not disappoint me."

I nodded still overwhelmed by the aura that graced His presence. Then He said to me "Turn backward."

I turned. The light from his eyes shone bright on the pathway. The path became clearer as the light shone brighter. Then I saw a crowd at the end of the road. They were a crowd of young boys and girls struggling to find their way to the path.

"I will purge you. I will purge your motives. I will purge your heart. I will rid you of every religious jargon that has held you back. Then...then...you will shine.

When you shine, young boys and girls would find their deliverance. They will find their way to me. They will find their way to destiny. They will find their way to my agenda for their lives.

But if you refuse, if you refuse to submit to purging, you cannot shine. If you drop out from the making process, you cannot last. And I... I.. I will replace you..."

His countenance changed as He repeated the last words over and over again. His once bright face gradually became sober. I didn't know how I knew but I just knew - It was painful for Him to have said those words. He meant them.

CHAPTER FOUR

FIREPROOF

"Will you not revive us again: that your people may rejoice in you?" (Psalm 85:6).

"I can spend time investing in a man, but when He decides to waste my investments, I will surely replace him." He said again, this time the words sunk deep into my soul.

"Men will hate you. Men will misunderstand you. Men will throw stones at you. You will be humiliated. But you have a choice - to choose between pleasing me and pleasing men."

As soon as he released those words, all I could think of was Martin Luther and how he suffered persecution in his church.

"Yes! Your fireproofed church will be the first..." He said. He clearly had an insight into my thoughts. And 'fireproof'? that was the second time He would be referring to my church that way.

"...then your family. Its going to be a pruning process for you."

I didn't want to get emotional before the Lord, but it happened. Mists formed in my eyes and I let them out as tears. But for the supernatural hands that kept my legs straightened, I would have fallen.

How could I? How could I ever stand in the shoes of Martin Luther? The way Robert Liardon explained it was too horrible an experience to go through. How could I, a young lady of twenty-one stand been declared an heretic by my own spiritual leaders? How could I stand been misunderstood by my own parents? What becomes of my education? Was I about to become a fanatic in the eyes of men? Would I ever get married?

These and many more raced through my mind. I looked up with my mouth opened to complain, just like Moses did when He was sent to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt. A look at his eyeballs and I saw my selfishness. What if Jesus hadn't died?

"Lord! This doesn't look easy." I finally managed to say.

"You have my Spirit. He is all you'll ever need. Engage Him." He replied, His voice gradually fading into silence.

Few minutes before I opened my eyes, I felt fear - the fear of disappointing Him. Then gradually the fear fizzled out as I kept hearing His last words - 'you have my Spirit.'

When I finally opened my eyes? Oh such joy! It was the joy of discovering God's mandate for your life.

By the time I came to myself, it was broad day light.

"Jesus!" I shouted as I caught a glimpse of the clock. It was 7:00AM on a Sunday morning. I really wished I could have solid time for my devotion. I couldn't. Service starts by 7:30AM and the last thing that could happen to me was to go a

minute late to church whether I had a function or not. That was one of the consecrations I had made to the Lord.

I jumped into the bathroom with songs of praises in my mouth as I took my bath and prayed simultaneously. Dressing up was quicker than I had thought but I had to scatter my whole room in the process. I poured the content of the 'Ghana-must-go' bag on the bed and selected just any good-to-go dress.

"Emma... Emma..." I shouted as I passed by our small sitting room, waking my kid brother from sleep. He must have slept off on the three-seater chair over the night.

"Oooooooooohhhhhh... Auntie Lydia now. I'm not going to church" he said sluggishly and closed his eyes again.

I walked over to mum and dad's bedroom and knocked. "Is no one going to church today?" I asked and walked off. I wasn't expecting any answer in particular. It wasn't a big deal. My family was not the church type. Only once in a while do we ever get to go to church as a family.

* * * * *

I drifted in and out of consciousness for the umpteenth time. Ordinarily, I would have placed my head on the chair in front of me and enjoyed the sleep like I always did. But I couldn't. I looked up and my eyes met Sister Lydia's. She smiled. She must have caught me sleeping. Her smiles made me resolute to fight the sleep again.

"Be ye holy for I am holy..." Pastor Timothy continued in his monotonous voice. Accompanied by sluggishness and unnecessary repetitions, his sermon was always a sleeping pill.

I looked over to the elders' seat and was disgusted. Virtually five out of seven elders were either sleeping or fighting really hard to stay awake. I caught a glimpse of my dad behind the pulpit and was not surprised. The only time he could be awake during a sermon was when the sermon was just starting or about rounding up.

I searched with my eyes and found my mum in the children corner. She was playing with this cute two year old girl, her bible and her jotter widely opened on her laps.

The lady beside me dropped her head on my shoulder and shook with fright. Her pen and jotter fell off. She opened her eyes mildly and I saw how ashamed she looked. In no time, she dozed off again.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHILE MEN SLEPT

"But while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat..." (Mathew 13:25).

I glanced at my wrist watch and he had only been preaching for thirty minutes. His sermon always lasted two hours. Again, I felt my consciousness ebbing away. I fought it. I couldn't just allow sleep deprive me of been a good example for the young ones in church especially Esther - a girl I was hoping would be my disciple soon. I looked in her direction and she was asleep too.

"Just a moment." My mind whispered to my brain. I placed my head on the chair in front of me and I let it – I let my eyes flicker into darkness.

Great fear fell on me as I lifted my gaze slowly from the tiled floor. The silence that greeted me sent shivers down my spine. It felt like I was in a cemetery.

Did everyone just go home without waking me up? Not even Esther? I raised my head fully and couldn't believe my eyes. Pastor Timothy was on the podium with his head on the pulpit. Was he dead?

A look at my environment and I got more bewildered. No one had left the church, almost everyone had their head on the chair in front of them.

I stood up disgusted. Then I saw, I saw two fat women which I later recognized as the church secretary and the welfare mama. They were smiling with a sense of fulfilment.

“Mrs. Arowolo, Mrs. Alabi...”

They looked up with shock written on their faces.

“What is the living doing among the dead?” Mrs. Arowolo asked, like a eagle about to pick on a chick.

“Who is living and who is dead?” I asked confused.

“We are in trouble.” Mrs. Alabi said. “We had better send her out before she wakes others.”

“Haa! See that one, she’s yawning, she’s yawning!” Mrs. Arowolo shouted like someone raising a danger alert.

My eyes followed her finger and I saw Esther, Pastor John’s daughter with her hand in her mouth like someone yawning.

“All the coldness will soon fizzle out from inside her. Yeee... she will come for her mum and her dad. What are we going to do? What are we going to do?” Mrs. Alabi lamented, clapping her legs like a mother whose only son was dying.

“Inashakatoskalabrash Elaskiboratalibradosh...”

The loudness or perhaps the power in that tongue geared me back to reality. I looked back and there was Esther, praying with all seriousness and vibrancy. I couldn't believe the accuracy of the revelation I just had. This church will not remain the same I heard my inner voice say.

As I stood up to join the end of service congregational prayer session, I caught a glimpse of Mrs. Alabi, the secretary signalling to a female usher.

The usher walked up to Esther. I knew what that was, it was a caution to reduce her voice or perhaps to stop her from praying in tongues. She had no choice than to obey. I sensed her discouragement.

"She needs wisdom, teach her" my inner voice instructed.

* * * * *

"Jesus is not happy with our church." Esther began as we settled down on a bench under a mango tree in the church premises.

“Why did you say that?” I asked.

“I saw Him.”

“You saw Him? When?”

“At the youth conference and even today?”

“Wow!”

“He told me our church looks like a living church but its dead. He told me there are more tares than wheat in our church. That the tares have choked the wheat. The wheat are running out of nutrients and are dying.”

“Hmmm...”

“He also told me that the tares could perform their enterprise as long as the leadership of the church relied more on obedience to church traditions than on God to choose its leaders...”

CHAPTER SIX**THE EZEKIELS**

"And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land..." (Ezekiel 22:30).

I shouldn't have been surprised that God was revealing this much to a naive teenager, yet I was. The revelations the Lord had given to her aligned perfectly with some of the things I had seen. The one question that rang in my heart while she spoke was what God wanted to achieve by revealing this to us simultaneously.

"I don't know. I'm just tired of this church. I'm tired of everything. Many things are not right." Esther lamented and I jolted back from my thoughts.

"Hmmm... Didn't He tell you what to ...?"

"Yeah, He did. He told me to begin playing the role of prophet Ezekiel. I don't even know what that means. What can a little me do?" Her tender voice said. I could sense both her fears and her timidity.

"Very soon, the strike would be called off and you will return back to campus. I'm scared that this change and excitement I have about God will disappear when you're gone."

"Hmmm... OK. Enough of the complains." I said, adjusting myself on the bench as if getting ready for a coaching session. Oh yes! That was what it was.

"Now listen. First, there is nothing little about you."

"What?" Her countenance read.

"Yeah, I know you are your father's little princess, you're still in SS3 and you're under the guide of your parent. But you see, the new you is greater than most people you see in our church."

"I don't get it."

"OK. When a man gets in touch with the Holy Ghost, he becomes another man. His right as a child of God becomes more pronounced. Before now, he is shielded by Christ. But now, he himself has become a shield. He receives the ability to call forth things into reality from the realm of the supernatural. For as long as he uses his authority, the kingdom of darkness becomes scared of him.

Esther, right now, the kingdom of darkness is in fright, running helter skelter because they know that if you know what they know about what you carry, they are in trou..."

"Sisters of God!" I heard a voice say from behind. We turned. It was Mrs. Arowolo, the welfare mama.

"Is there another service going on here?" She teased.

"Oh no ma." I replied with a smile. "We were just waiting for Esther's dad to be through with the meetings."

"Oh! That's alright." Then she turned to Esther with a changed countenance "I hope you haven't started attending your worldly school fellowship?"

"No ma" Esther replied, avoiding her gaze.

"Because I was wondering where you got those strange tongues you exhibited during the service." She said, clapped her hands with a sarcastic rhythm and stood akimbo.

"You people should be careful of services you attend and please don't bring strange fire into our church." She warned and kept quiet.

"She's sorry ma." I said breaking the silence. Esther repeated after me "I'm sorry ma."

"I better talk to your mum to be more vigilant." She said and walked off.

Esther looked at me and I read in her eyes - fear, discouragement, despair, despondency. More pronounced than the rest was her doubt. I understood.

I went through the same when I first got the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Our religious background was such that relegated the realities of the Holy Ghost. Sometimes, they even insinuate that those who work in these realities were possessed with a demon.

"Look here girl, you saw Jesus didn't you?" I asked and she nodded in the affirmative.

"Good! How has it been since yesterday's encounter?"

"I have been full of joy and unexplainable peace. My elder brother has been calmed since I prayed in his presence which is unusual. My quiet time this morning was great. I haven't prayed for more than ten minutes before but today, I prayed for 45 minutes. I stayed awake throughout the family devotion yesternight. This morning, when I rebelled against dad in my heart as we drove to church, something told me what I did wasn't right and that I should apologize and I did. Mum..." She was saying in her childish voice when I cut in.

"Alright. Alright..." I said, my hands gesticulating to regulate her pace."

"Now, do you think a devil would have repaired your life this much overnight? Do you think a devil will stir you up to obey God and be obedient to your parent? Do you think a devil would give you strength to pray? Do you think a devil will show you that the church needs to be revived?"

"No... No... No..." She replied as I threw the question at her one after the other. When I was done, her fear had melted into thin air.

"Never, never let anyone make you think you have a devil. You don't! You have the Holy Ghost. Say to yourself I have the Holy Ghost."

"I have the Holy Ghost."

"I have the life giving Spirit of God."

"I have the life giving Spirit of God."

"Satan is in trouble!"

"Satan is in trouble!" She said raising her voice and her right hand simultaneously.

"Esther! Esther!" Her mum yelled from afar.

"I think dad is ready."

"Yeah you should go now. But just before you do, they can stop you from praying in tongues in church, but they can't stop you from praying it at home, in school or in your mind. Speaking in tongues is your prayer language. Don't be afraid. When the Holy Ghost gives you utterance, use it! It charges your spirit man."

"That's all. You can go." I said. She looked towards where her mum had been and could not find her.

"One more thing" she said as she turned her head to face me.

"The prophet Ezekiel thing keeps ringing in my heart. Somehow you forgot to say something about it."

"Oh! That. God was simply telling you to interceed for the church. Just like we have ascertained, our church is like a valley of dead dry bones and God wants us to pro-phe-sy life into it."

My mouth slowed down midway. I didn't even realized that until now. This was it! God wanted us to pray. How did I forget that the first thing to do when God was revealing something about his church was to pray more for the church.

"Can we meet to pray one of this days?"

"Esther! Esther! Es..."

"You should go now. See you at the youth bible study on Thursday."

She ran off and my eyes followed. Her mum's eyeballs rolled in circles and I couldn't just imagine what poison Mrs. Arowolo had poured into her.

"In the valley of dead dry bones, there can only be two categories of personalities -
The dead dry bones and the Ezekiels!"

"Oh precious Lord!" I said to myself. That looked like the interpretation of the
revelation I had during the service. Me and Esther are the Ezekiels in this valley of
dead dry bones.

Ready to go home, I stood up on my feet.

"Wherever the sole of my feet shall tread upon, the Lord shall give unto me.

I prophesy life, life into every youth in this church.

I prophesy an awakening.

Dry bones!

Come alive,

Come alive!

Raagadoshikata lebrandish

Immanshphato skato brando

limbrashisphatokabash

ratoskilatodashibo" walking and praying in my mind all the way home.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HUNGER

"And the angel of the Lord came... and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee." - 1 Kings 19:7

"...(Eat) the fire that saith not, it is enough." - Proverbs 30:16.

Some sensations washed over me like water cascading down a cliff, leaping from rock to rock. The rhythm of the heavenly song from Sharon pierced through my skin, causing my bones to shiver. I wanted to close my eyes, at the same time, I wanted to open them.

I thought of putting a call through to sister Lydia. She was the one that had organized the prayer session, but she had to leave immediately she was done, leaving me the assignment to interact with the attendees and get their contacts. I was doing just that when suddenly I felt like singing. I raised a song and others joined me.

We were only worshipping God for giving us the opportunity to intercede for the church when Sharon started screaming. Few minutes later, her screams turned to a song. It looked like she was speaking in tongues, yet she was singing.

We held hands for about ten minutes more, singing 'kadosh kadosh, you are mighty on your throne'. Then I decided it was time to bring the meeting to a close.

"In Jesus name we have worshipped."

"Amen!"

Everywhere was silent. Just when I was about to open my mouth, Sharon whispered

"The well of life is here. Right here. Right now. Draw... draw... draw..."

"Eeiiaa ya. My father." Mathew groaned from behind.

"The water is flowing freely, someone will be immersed in the living water now."

She said.

"Hummamamamamama..." Rachael mumbled.

"Jesus! Are you here? Can you hear me? Fill me with all of you." Tobi shouted.

"The journey is far... Eat... Eat... Eat...this is the right time to eat..." Sharon continued.

I stood with my eyes opened watching all that was happening simultaneously.

"Jesus! Is that you? What are those angels carrying? Angelic food? Haaa! Please feed me. Feed me with the food of the immortals..." Lara lamented and went on her knees. Tears rushed down her eyes as she buried her face in her palms.

"Fire o! I see fire! I see fire! Yeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee" Mary, the youngest of us screamed, throwing her hands and legs in the air.

"Maragadosh skitalambro mantosheya... I want more, I want more, more o, I want more..."

"Haa! Go ahead Lord. Burn off. Burn off everything that will not allow you to feed me. Let there be a burning by mercy, my Fatherrrrr" Rachel said, her two hands locked together and pressing down her head.

The sun was going down and I knew what that meant for most of us. We were all teenagers and our parents would need our attention for dinner. This explained why I kept my eyes opened, looking for any short opportunity to calm everyone down and bring the meeting to a close.

"Until Elijah ate, he could not confront Jezebel. You cannot defeat that strongman in your family lineage until you eat enough to conquer... Eat! Eat! Esther... Eat!"

My stomach shook as the words hit my ears. My head felt like it was expanding. My breathe increased at the same rate as my desperation. I didn't know what to say. What would I ask for? I closed my eyes for a start. Then I saw.

"Fffffffaaaaathhhhhhhhhherrrr!" I screamed.

I was seeing a mantle hanging in the air. On it was written "For the deliverance of John's family."

I saw myself sitting on the ground, weak and helpless. I attempted to raise my hands but they had no stamina.

"Haaaaaa! See this weak child. My God! Quicken me o God!" I prayed.

"Eat...eat...eat!" Sharon shouted.

I raised my head and opened my mouth literally like I wanted to receive a spoon full of rice. Just then I saw a man drop a big bowl of burning fire right in front of me.

"Eat! Eat in the morning, eat in the afternoon, eat in the night. You can't exhaust it."

The man in white said to me.

"Eebi npa mi o (I am hungry o)" Sharon shouted.

"Something is wrong with me. Why am I not seeing anything? why am I not hungry? Father! Baptize me with hunger!" Introverted Timothy shouted at the top of his voice.

Almost immediately, I felt one of his legs hit my bended knees. I opened my eyes and found him flat on the floor, groaning, his fingers widely apart shivering like some electric shocks were passing through them.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FLAMMABLE

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

As it is written, for Your sake, we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." - Romans 8:35,36.

"Oh Jesus...Jesus...we want to burn. We want to burn for you." I whispered, after taking a good look at everybody's posture.

"Thank you Father, thank you Lord. I will stay flammable. I will keep the fire. I will Lord. By your grace." Sharon said and gradually came to silence.

It was 8:00PM already. Three hours extra gone. The original plan was a 4:00PM to 5:00PM intercession for the church. But clearly, God had His plans.

"Before we say the grace" Sharon said after we had prayed the closing prayers.



"Jesus said we should stay flammable. He said He showed us these things not because we deserved it but because He wanted us to walk in these realities."

Then she kept quiet. Everyone tried to find her face in the midst of the darkness.

"Are you crying?" Mathew asked.

"Yes I am... Maragadosh phatalembrosh skintadanraletobrosha... I am not just crying. I am weeping. I weep because I'm not sure if I can trust man anymore. I have willingly visited you today. I hope that you will not be like the other men. I hope that you will not take this encounters for granted.

I hope that you will not grieve me by worshiping the fire instead of worshipping me. I hope you will stay flammable by staying away from sin. I hope many things. Many...many...many have disappointed me. I hope you won't be numbered among them. Lebrastophatashkalabrunto..." She ended.

"Can we just ask God for grace this moment?" I said.

"Go ahead and pray. Tell God that by His grace you will hate sin. Tell Him that you will stay flammable. Tell Him that you will not love the fire above Him. Go ahead and talk to the Father."

By 8:15PM, we were done. No one seemed to be bothered about what our parents reactions might be as we sang joyfully, walking down the street.

Rachel was the first to reach her turning, leaving me with the others. Mathew also branched. My house was the farthest. So I soon remained alone and only then did it dawn on me what might be awaiting me at home.

"Paa...paa...paa" it was three resounding slaps, delivered on my left cheek one after the other. This happened after I explained to mum that I went for a prayer meeting. I shouldn't have mentioned that the prayer was organized by sister Lydia. Maybe I would have escaped the slaps.

"I'm sorry mum." I mumbled, rubbing my cheek to relieve the pains.

"Get into the house. Disobedient child. How many times have I told you to stay away from Lydia? Didn't I tell you what Mrs. Arowolo told me about that girl three weeks ago. Ehn? You chose to disobey shebi? When I finish redesigning your life with slaps, you will understand better..." the nagging started.

"There's always a price to pay for following God. When you find that your journey through life is too rosy, you should ask yourself 'am I still following God?'"

That was dad during the night devotion. He was not at home when I returned so I wandered if God was trying to reach me through him.

Sincerely, I had given up on Sister Lydia. "I would just avoid her and continue to love God in my closet." I had concluded in my mind.

"Your trials are God's ways of making you purer and flammable..."

My eyes widened at the sound of the word 'flammable'. Now I was sure it was God speaking to me. I went to bed with an unexplainable joy. The joy that Jesus knew and saw mum slapped me and had spoken through dad to heal my wounds.

CHAPTER NINE**I DON'T WANT TO BE NORMAL**

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do;..." - John 14:12.

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19)

The heaviness in my eyeballs flew out the window as she threw the question at me. I searched for the wall clock and it was 6:00AM in the morning. I held my chest as if protecting my heart from jumping out. Is he missing?

"Mummm..."

"Don't mummy me! I asked you a question and I'm asking again. What happened to Mathew?"

"I... I... I don't know ma."

"You don't know? He told me he was coming for a prayer meeting organized by you and you don't know?"

"What, what exactly is the problem ma?" I said, more timidly.

"The small boy have been groaning since he returned last night. And he's speaking a language I don't understand. At first, I thought he was praying. Then the prayer refused to end. Its been 8hours, 8 hours Lydia, and Mathew is still on his knees."

"8 hours? My God!"

"I couldn't sleep. I'm supposed to drop him off in school this morning, but the boy can't even hear me. He's lost his voice, yet he keeps shedding tears and groaning. He's the only one I've got. I'm afraid."

"Don't be mum." I heard Mathew's croaked voice.

"He's here. I'll talk to you later. I'll talk to you later." Mrs. Adeosun said excitedly and dropped the call.

"Oh God! I thought that meeting was a waste of time. You were up to something Lord. You were." I said, my knees finding their way to the ground.

That was the entry point into my devotion that morning. Two solid hours of communion. It was a blend of worship, prayers and deep insight into the word.

"Lydia! Lydia! How on earth will you still be in bed at this time? Ehn? Is this how useless you want to be in your husband's house." Mum yelled from the kitchen.

I closed my bible and asked the Lord to continue communing with me as I get started with the day's activities.

"...Holy Ghost! I don't want to be normal o..." my phone rang. It was a strange number.

"Hello. Am I on to sister Lydia?"

"Yes sir. I hope everything is fine."

"Oh yes. I am Mr. Oni, Mary's father. I just got your number from Pastor John. He came to drop Esther in school."

"Oh! That's OK sir."

"I learnt you were the one that organized the prayer meeting Mary came for yesterday evening?"

"Yes sir. I am. Anything the matter?"

"Mary has not remained the same since yesterday. This morning she woke us all up one after the other and made us assemble in the sitting room. She shared with us an encounter she had at the prayer meeting yesterday..."

"Hmmm"

"It was a scary revelation. She shared with us how she saw hell fire. And how Jesus told her to tell her family to escape. It was so real. The good news is that her mum and her three elder brothers gave their lives to Christ after her charge."

"Wow!"

"You needed to see them broken down with tears. I have never seen my wife cry that much. She even asked me to forgive her stubbornness. I have prayed for their genuine salvation for so long. I am so happy."

"Congratulations sir. I'm happy for your family."

"I have called to say thank you. Thank you so much for what you're doing in the life of our youths."

"You're welcome sir." I said and my heart smote me immediately.

"All thanks be to God sir, for what He has done and for what He will still do." I quickly added.

"I can't wait to meet you in person. God bless you my sister."

We exchanged more pleasantries and the call ended. I discerned pride in my heart and I quickly asked God for grace not to share in His glory.

"How can a lady of marriageable age be waking up at 8:00AM? Do you expect your mother-in-law to tolerate all this nonsense I'm tolerating from you. No wonder she always come back home from school lean. She is too lazy, too lazy..." Mum was saying, when I joined her in the kitchen.

"Good morning mum." She ignored me.

"Your younger brother have gone to school without breakfast. Does that sound right to you?"

"I'm sorry."

"Sorry for yourself o. All your mates would have woken up, swept and be done with making breakfast. But you? You will be using bible and prayer to avoid house chores. Its only school fees you know how to ask for. God help you o." She said as she stirred the content in the pot and placed it on the stove.

I overcame the urge to say a word, moved over to the sink and started with the dishes. I prayed in my mind, asking God to give me grace not to talk back at her. I also asked for grace to wake up early every morning to avoid subsequent nagging like this.

The rest of my day was awesome until I received a text at about 4:00PM:

"...Appear before the panel of elders after the service on Sunday. From the church secretary."

I instantly called the secretary back to verify if the message was actually meant for me.

"These happenings are abnormal. They are strange. They are out of the ordinary. You either submit yourself to deliverance or be sanctioned. Which ever way, be present at the meeting on Sunday." Mrs. Arowolo said and ended the call.

"What happenings were abnormal?" I asked myself. "Could there be more than I have heard?"

My curious mind couldn't wait for Thursday to come. I would meet with each of them after the youth Bible study and find out.

CHAPTER TEN**POWER!**

"...Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my POWER in you, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." (Romans 9:17).

"...quicken us, and we will call upon thy name." (Psalm 80:18).

"The first beings I saw were two angels" He said and I sat up. The youth pastor, brother Lawrence stared at him – that look that meant

"Unbelievable!" Silence swept through the auditorium as other youths looked at him expecting him to continue.

Brother Lawrence had instructed that those who went for the prayer meeting should array themselves in front of the pulpit. All of them had walked to the front, except Rachael who was reported absent at the bible study.

"I heard some strange things happened to you people that did not go down well with the leadership of the church. As your leader, I deserve to know. Now, I want

each of you to share your experiences with us. Mathew, let's hear you" He had said.

"Then I saw Jesus standing behind them both. His body was emitting sparkles of fire. Jesus told the angels to bring me. They came to my side and held my arms as if they wanted to lift me up but nothing happened. The longer I saw them hold my hands, the more I prayed. After a while, I discovered that we were moving towards Jesus. But we were not walking" He said and kept quiet.

"Is that all? What do we make of your story?"

"On my way home, after leaving the others, I passed by a church that was having a night service. I heard the preacher say quicken me oh God and I will call upon your name. He made mention that there is a quickening that makes a man remain in the place of prayer forever. He said when you motivate yourself to pray, you may get tired. But when God quickens you to pray, he gives you a divine strength to stay and prevail in prayers." He kept quiet again, as if looking for the next right words.

“Hmmm” I sighed. A young boy stood up from the third row in the left column. Everyone must have thought he was going to use the toilet. But he went straight to the front and stood directly in front of Mathew. He said

“My name is Yusuf. My father is a muslim but my mum changed to Christian. I don’t always know whether to go to church or to go to mosque. You said you saw Jesus? Can you help me see Him? I want to see Him. I want to talk to Him.”

Brother Lawrence was surprised, he couldn’t hide it. He opened his mouth slightly and closed it again. Finally, he spoke out. “Young boy, I salute your desperation. But you see, you don’t have to see Jesus before you talk to Him. Just close your eyes and say the words, He will hear you.”

“No! I have been going to mosque with my father but mum tells me that there is a Jesus. I want to believe my mum but I know too much of the Quran that believing is so impossible. I know if I see Jesus and we talk, He will give me boldness to dare the threats of my father”

“You really want to see Jesus?” Timothy, who was standing beside Mathew asked.

“Yes! I want to see Him right now and right here”.

"OK. Close your eyes.”

He closed his eyes. Nothing happened. The intensity of the suspense was obvious on the face of every boy and girl around me. Brother Lawrence rested on the pulpit with a look that I interpret to mean stop wasting time.

The thing that surprised me was that Yusuf did not open his eyes. He just stood there with his hands clapped together like someone reciting a mantra.

“There’s no time for all this pranks my boys. We are done. You all should see me in the pastor’s office right away.” Then he turned to the pew and said “I’m sorry for keeping you back for this long after the bible study. You all should go home straight now. God bless you.”

He moved three to five steps on his way out. Then he stopped, looked at the pew and saw that everyone sat still. If you ask me, I don't even know why I maintained my position too. Yusuf still had his two hands clapped together.

"You all should go home before it's late" He said.

"Jesus! I'm not going home until I see you." Yusuf screamed. Almost immediately, he went down, shaking vigorously. I saw Sharon's mouth move and paid attention to what she might be whispering. "Jesus!" That was what she was whispering.

Two other boys stood up simultaneously to the front. "I want to see Jesus too!" The first boy said.

"What do you want?" Mathew asked the second boy.

"I want to pray for eight hours like you did. I want to go to the mad people's home and lay my hands on my mum like you did for your dad and he was healed. I want to have that fire that shone in your eyes when you were telling us the story. I

want..." He suddenly stopped and held his face with his hands, wiping out tears. He tried to stop crying but he couldn't.

"I know Jesus will not give me what He gave you. He won't. I am such a bad boy. I watch pornography. I have a girl friend that we commit immorality together. Just last week, I started joining my friends to drink alcohol..."

"If you will just use half of the time you have spent counting your sins to tell Jesus to forgive you. He will have. And then we can get back to getting what I got." Mathew interrupted him.

Young boys and girls began to whisper from different angles of the church. Some of them had tears running down their cheeks.

"Oh Jesus! I see you. I see you. Thank you. Thank you for coming to me. I will tell my father. I will tell him that Jesus is real. I will tell my muslim friends. I will tell my cousins. Thank you Jesus. Thank you for giving me a new name. Thank you for..." Yusuf was saying when he snapped back from his unconscious state.

I didn't want to be left out so I closed my eyes. They opened right back. There was Brother Lawrence, five steps away from the pulpit with tears running down his cheeks. I was moved at the sight of his conviction so much that tears gathered in my eyes immediately I closed them to pray.

CHAPTER ELEVEN**CHURCH ON FIRE!**

"And the church was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power..."

(Revelations 15:8).

I opened my eyes to check the wall clock behind the pulpit. My fear was that time had passed and mum would be greatly worried. I guessed right. It was five minutes to 8PM already. We had been agonizing for more than two hours.

Sharon, Mathew, Timothy and the rest were still on their knees. Tears continued to rush down their faces like some taps had been let loose. Wild and thunderous tongues flowed out of their mouth, causing the atmosphere to become more heated.

Some of the youths sat on the floor. Others were flat on their chest. Yusuf was still laughing hard in the Spirit. The two other boys were now sited on the floor beside me, singing all kinds of angelic songs.

I was still contemplating whether or not to leave when I saw Him. He couldn't be mistaken -dressed in an exceptionally glowing white robe, His hair like the dew of the morning, His eyes brighter than the morning star.

They shone so brightly that I couldn't look at them. His presence was huge - so heavy that I thought I would faint.

"This is a church on fire." He said and literal fire descended on the pulpit. I screamed at the sight of wild fire burning just a few centimeters away from brother Lawrence. He had his head between his thighs.

"Jesus!" He screamed immediately the fire descended.

"Baptize me. Immerse me. Consume me. Make me a firebrand Lord." He shouted and fell flat on his chest. Almost immediately, he sat up, facing the pulpit, holding his legs and roaring in wild tongues.

"The prayer bank of this church have been filled up with the tender, sincere and heartfelt prayers of you and your colleagues in the past few weeks. Here is the reward." He continued. The light radiating from His presence shone brighter causing every other thing to become invisible.

"Henceforth, the activities of darkness in this church cease to be hidden." He said and I repeated after him spontaneously.

"I have remembered this church for good. And I will raise up fruitful members of the body of Christ from this church.

This is what I want to do in every cold church. But the young ones whose prayers should be more efficient and richer have been deluded by the enemy.

Fashion trends and worldly pleasures have made God and the church none of their business. The parents are not helping matters. They discourage their children from experiencing the fullness of the Holy Spirit. They are afraid that their wards may become fanatics.

This is your mandate. Tell such youths. Warn such parents. They will be judged for their insolence.

Esther, I have chosen you. This is your purpose. Go and win teenagers and young adults over to me. Expose them to the person of the Holy Spirit. I need them for the end time revival that will sweep across the earth. It will be a revival greater than the Welsh revival."

* * * * *

The strike was called off that Thursday night. I returned back to school on Saturday with all joy. Esther called on Sunday night to inform me that the headquarter church had sent them a new Pastor.

"Aunty Lydia, Jesus taught me Mathematics in my dream" she had mentioned.

My eyeballs twinkled uncontrollably at the sound of that. Indeed encountering God affects every areas of a man's life, academics inclusive.

"Wow! That's great!"

"Ma'am, did you hear that Sunday, the head of the thugs on the church street have received Christ?"

"Really?"

"Yes ma. It happened when we went out for Evangelism after the Sunday Service. He got convicted after Mathew told him all there was to know about his background. It was a prophetic session ma."

"That's wonderful!"

"The fire must not go out o." I warned.

"It won't ma. I spoke to Sharon and Mathew in the morning... We have the permission of the new Pastor to hold youth prayer vigils every Friday."

"Thanks sister Lydia. Thanks for organizing that prayer meeting."

"To God be the glory." I smiled and replied.

The joy of fulfilment overwhelmed me. Yet, I couldn't forget that this was just one of the situations God wanted me to rescue.

"Oh for grace to be more sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Oh for courage to carry out more of His biddings at all cost. Oh for added strength in the things I cannot do alone." I prayed.

THE END

Have you heard about Peculiar Youths Connect (PYC)? It is an interdenominational platform devoted to raising teenagers and youths who love God and are fulfilling destiny through exposure to the person of the Holy Spirit.

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