

A close-up, artistic photograph of a person's face, focusing on the eye and cheek. The skin is dark and textured. There are vibrant paint splatters in shades of green, red, and white around the eye. The background is a light, textured surface with more paint splatters.

GOD'S WILL NOVELS

Hidden Tears

The struggles and pains of an African graduate

WRITTEN BY SUCCESS ADEGBITE

HIDDEN TEARS

(THE STRUGGLES AND PAINS OF AN AFRICAN GRADUATE)

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Appreciation

I APPRECIATE THE ALMIGHTY GOD FOR THE OPPORTUNITY GIVEN TO ME TO WRITE THIS NOVEL. HE IS MY SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND I'M NOTHING WITHOUT HIM.

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And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Revelation 21:4)

Chapter 1

"Kon kon kon"

My flat shoe made a funny sound as I surreptitiously walked into the compound. That was my habit to avoid being seen by anyone in the compound. Unnecessary discussions weren't my thing. You might love them, but, as for me, I can't imagine one of my neighbors asking me; "How is your mom? How are your unborn children? When last did you hear from your great-grandfather? How much do you buy tomatoes?"

I'm not the gossip type or the always-talking type and since we have a lot of apartments in my compound, keeping to myself seems to be the best way of avoiding unnecessary discussions. Well, you can call me a snub, but, I'm far from it. I spend hours talking to my fiancée on the phone. Would you like to know him? Let's rather not discuss him for now.

Immediately I entered my house, the first thing I heard was the sound of running water.

"Oh, my days!" I shouted as I rushed to my bathroom to turn off the tap.

Thanks to the little opening on my bathroom floor, my whole room

would have been flooded with water.

In the morning, water had stopped rushing out when I was cleaning up. I assumed my neighbors had finished using the water pumped into the compound. I switched to my second option which was a pail of clean water. I had fetched it earlier. After taking my bath in the morning, I moved out of the bathroom forgetting to turn off the tap.

"Thank God", I heaved as I turned off the tap knowing that the running water could have caused me another embarrassment from my neighbors. I'm sure that my neighbors would have come to shout at me for wasting the compound water if they were aware that I left my tap on.

Talking about embarrassments, I have had a lot of them that day. Two to be precise.

I got back to my room and went straight to my bed. As I lay on my bed, the manager's words rang in my head.

"You are very intelligent and qualified for the job, but, we need a more experienced person",

I rolled on my bed angrily as I ruminated on those words.

"What more experience do they need? What more experience? Out of

the five hundred and twenty-three people who wrote an exam to apply for their job, only twenty people passed and I was one of the twenty. I proceeded to the final stage and did well in the interview session. I answered all the questions they asked me brilliantly. How dare the manager tell me that I'm not well experienced? That company is a scam?" I murmured to myself angrily and a single tear escaped my face.

It's not a big deal and it doesn't deserve my tears, right? Only if you know that company was the fifth one I have been rejected in the space of a month. It wasn't because I graduated from the university with a bad result. I graduated with a good result. Second class upper!

But, I guess I wasn't just lucky.

Well, the embarrassment from the manager was even better than the second embarrassment I had that day. Would you like to know the second embarrassment? It's more humiliating than anything you can think of.

After the manager said his annoying words, I said an insincere "thank you" and moved out of his office.

I got outside the company and stood there waiting for a taxi. The sun was blazing hot and sweat was running down my face. The only wish I

had was to get a taxi on time. I wanted to leave that place which seemed like hell to me. I stood by the roadside for ten minutes, but, couldn't get a taxi. I was starting to get frustrated when a car that had passed by me some seconds ago reversed.

Yes! It did. It reversed. I wasn't even looking in its direction because I didn't know anyone close to me who had such a kind of car. The car parked beside me and the driver sounded the horn to attract me.

I moved closer and I suddenly felt that my eyes were deceiving me.

Lilah! Lilah!

I rubbed my eyes to be sure that I was seeing properly.

"Lilah, is that you?" I asked.

"Katherine! Nice to see you again. It's been a long time", Lilah said gleefully.

"Are you going in this direction?" Lilah asked pointing to the direction I was going.

"Yes, I am", I answered.

"Come on in", Lilah said.

I hopped in the car and she started driving.

"What a small world! I never believed we would meet again. I lost all my contacts after we graduated from the university. How have you been?" Lilah asked.

"I have been fine", I answered with a fake smile which did a great work in hiding my jealousy.

Lilah out of all people. It looked as if I was still dreaming. I wanted to pinch her to know if she was real. She looked beautiful and her car was one of the latest cars in the country.

I know you might be thinking I'm a bad person because of my thoughts towards Lilah. It wasn't that I hated her, but, she was the last person I could ever think of living that good.

We studied the same course in the university, but, when we were in school, Lilah was so careless with her education. She rarely attended lectures and she never read her books. One thing she was good at was going after guys. She had an uncountable number of boyfriends. She lived a wayward life.

We lived in the same hostel, so, I know most of the things she did very

well. I was part of the Christian sisters in school who used to preach to her to change her ways.

Her result when we were graduating from university? It was very bad. She just managed to finish with a third class.

"Are you a staff in the company where I met you? Lilah asked in a beautiful accent different from the accent she spoke with when we were in school.

"Yes! No actually. I went there for an interview", I answered. I didn't want to tell a lie.

"Oh really? You finished with second-class upper, didn't you?" She asked.

"Was she tried trying to mock me?" I thought.

"Yes, I did", I replied to her.

"It's well. I hope you get a job there", She said.

I couldn't tell her that they had already rejected me and her hope was useless.

"Well, I got employment into Azik company immediately after I finished my National Youth Service Corps", Lilah said as she drove on.

I almost exploded.

Azik Company? That was one of the best companies in the city. I had tried getting employed to that company three different times, but, it never worked out.

"I'm happy for you, Lilah", I said sweetly hiding the jealousy that was fully blown in my body.

"Thank you darling", she said and almost immediately her phone rang.

From where I sat, I could see the name of the caller. The number was saved with my hubby.

It wasn't what I was thinking, was it?

Lilah picked up the call happily.

"Hello my baby"

"My day was very fine"

"I didn't stress myself".

"I'm coming home already".

"I bought some fruit for you".

"I also have a lot of gist for you".

"Can't wait to get home and hug you".

"Love you. Bye".

"That's my husband", Lilah said happily as she dropped the call.

"You are married?" I asked in surprise.

"Sure! Aren't you married?" Lilah asked.

I couldn't answer. It was then that I saw the beautiful ring on Lilah's finger. It was then I also noticed a bump in her stomach.

"I got married last year. And now, I'm six months pregnant", Lilah said.

"Wow!" I exclaimed.

Lilah who was very wayward when we were in school was married already and already pregnant while I who lived a holy life was still struggling. Am I the only one thinking that this life no balance? Maybe not.

Soon, Lilah got to the place where I would drop.

I immediately told her that I was going to drop there.

Lilah looked for a good place to park and parked her car.

She held my hands and said, "Katherine, I'm sure that you might be

getting frustrated and unhappy that you don't have a good job, a husband, or a child yet, but, you don't have to. God does things in His own time. I'm sure your time is coming. Continue walking in the ways of God", she said.

My tongue was tied for a second.

"You now know God?" I asked.

"Yes, I'm now born again".

"It's finished. What else do I have as an edge over her?" I thought.

Lilah and I exchanged phone numbers and she promised to call me. She gave me twenty thousand naira cash before I left her car.

You don't see any embarrassment in that, do you?

Well, that's the worst embarrassment I have ever had.

"God, why are you so merciful? You saved a person like Lilah after all she has done and you still favored her", I murmured as I continued rolling on my bed.

I opened my bag and brought out the money Lilah gave me.

"Well, this would help me for some weeks", I said refusing to thank God

for the money. I wished God could see how angry I was.

I had served Him all my life, yet, what did he use to repay me", I thought.

I knew my anger would soon subside and soon I would be back on my knees praying to God and begging Him for mercy.

After all the embarrassment I had eaten that day, I knew I still had to eat food.

I stood up from my bed and lazily walked up to my kitchen to prepare noodles.

After all, it was the cheapest I could afford and the easiest and fastest I could cook.

The next morning, I was welcomed to consciousness from sleep by a strong smell. The smell was choking. I jumped up from my bed thinking it was my house that was getting burnt. I looked around and saw no smoke. I looked at the time and it was 10:20 a.m.

I never woke up earlier than ten in the morning unless for important occasions, events, and interviews. Since I was jobless, I saw no essence in waking up early. Who wakes up early when she has no plans for the day or nowhere to go? Do you? Well, that's not me.

The smell continued. It smelt like a burnt cake.

I rushed to my kitchen to see if I forgot anything on fire before I slept the previous night, but, nothing was burning.

I returned to my room and perceived the smell again.

I couldn't take it anymore. I rushed out and realized that it was coming from my neighbor's apartment. I rushed to Eunice's apartment and discovered that the door was open. I walked right in, moved to the kitchen, and switched off the oven.

Could you believe that Eunice had done a burnt offering again? She was always leaving her food on fire to do other things. She wasn't even at home this time around.

I laughed carelessly at her as I removed her cake from the oven. It wasn't that bad. She just had to scrape the bottom layer.

Yes, Eunice was my neighbor and also a close friend of mine; my gist partner. She was also a baker. She loved baking birthday cakes and cupcakes. She had different customers.

I was about to return to my apartment when Eunice came by the door. As she saw me, she stood transfixed for a moment trying to

comprehend why I was coming out of her room. In two seconds, she got it and rushed to her kitchen screaming, "My cake oooooooooo".

I burst into uncontrollable laughter as she ran.

She heaved a sigh when she saw it on the cake board in her kitchen.

"Thank you for saving my life, babe. You are one in a million", Eunice said and hugged me.

I slightly pushed her away, "Go away joor, burnt offering sacrificer",

We both burst into laughter.

"So, tell me, where did you go to?" I asked.

Eunice scratched her head and looked at me sheepishly.

" Hmm Hmm, Don't give me that kind of look. I understand you when you do that. Just tell me the truth, I want to hear it", I told her.

"Well, my fiancée came around yesterday night and spent the night here. So, I saw him off some minutes ago", Eunice admitted.

Eunice's words struck a cord in my neck.

"Her fiancée came around, he slept over", I thought. I started imagining how fun it would be having my fiancée come sleep over. That one? He

doesn't even care about me. The last time I saw my fiancée was six months ago when he came for a wedding ceremony of one of our friends and we didn't even get to spend much time together. I imagined how sweet it would be to be wrapped in my fiancée's arms over the night.

"Katherine!" Eunice shouted at me.

I was carried away.

"Oh! I'm sorry. I was thinking of something", I admitted.

"What were you thinking about?" She asked.

"Nothing really important", I replied.

"Okay then, let's make chin chin", Eunice said.

"So, you think I left my apartment without brushing my teeth or doing any house chores just to fry chin chin? I'm not interested", I said to her.

"You are lying. It's not because of what you want you want to do in your apartment, you don't just want your hands stuck in flour butter paste like it did the last time", Eunice said and made fun of me.

"You are such a bully", I smirked and left her apartment.

As I walked back to my apartment, my mind kept going back to having a visit from my fiancée. I started having awkward thoughts and feelings. Almost immediately, it dawned on me that I was having lustful thoughts. I desperately wanted my fiancée to come visit me, and do what exactly; talk? No, we could do that on the phone. Then, what? Rest my head on his broad shoulders and talk about our future together or being wrapped in his arms with the warmest hugs ever.

I suddenly stopped. "Am I sinning?" I asked myself.

"Eunice is a worker in her church, as a matter of fact, she is a choir member, yet, her fiancée visits her, so, it's not wrong", a voice whispered in my mind.

I smiled sheepishly and rushed to my room. My room looked empty and dull as ever, the only living soul there was me. I picked up my phone to call my fiancée.

Chapter 2

It was another bright new day. Did I just say new? Well, no day seemed new to me, because, every day was always the same. I was always repeating the same pattern. It was just like living one day a thousand times, the normal dull, boring me watching movies, eating chunks, playing games, chatting with people.

I stood up from my bed and saw my Bible under my blanket. I hissed at myself. I had slept off the previous night intending to read my Bible, but, I ended up making it a bed rest. Talking about reading the Bible, I wasn't stable with reading my Bible. It was just once in a while.

My mind went back to when I was in the university. I was very conversant with the Bible then. I would read the scriptures from back to back in just a few months. I knew so many things in the scriptures. Then, I could read many verses off-head. I even taught in Bible Study in my fellowship. My prayer life then was fire. I would wake up every midnight and pray in the spirit for hours. During the daytime, I would leave the hostel and go for a prayer walk. There were so many prayer programs in my fellowship and I was even the Assistant Sisters Coordinator. The prayer life of so many members was strengthened through me.

Remembering those memories made me feel I had changed a lot. I was no longer the same person I was then. I sat on my bed and my gaze went to my Bible. I wanted to sit up and read. On the second thought, I felt discouraged. I took my gaze away and stood up from my bed to do the day's business.

The day's business? Yes, the day's business. It was true that I was jobless, but, that didn't mean that I never did anything. Apart from, waking up, brushing my teeth, bathing, cooking, eating, watching movies, chatting, and sleeping, there were other things I did. Although, they didn't surmount to much.

I had a friend who specialized in selling beautiful outfits and shoes. Every day, I helped her advertise the outfits and shoes on my What'sApp status. Anyone interested in buying them would message me and I would deliver it to them earning a little profit. Well, not that alone, I also sold airtime and data to people. Well, that's not pretty much work, but, that was what I used to hold body encouraging myself that I would get a collar job very soon.

I picked up my phone and did an advertisement on my status. About three people bought data within thirty minutes. I hissed at myself. That

was only six hundred naira profit.

"I can't continue living like this. This is terrible", I said to myself.

I moved straight to the bathroom to freshen up. After that, I returned to my room to dress up. I picked up a mini gown from my wardrobe. I had nowhere to go, so, why dress huge?

After dressing up, I headed straight to the kitchen. Of course which was the next in line of my everyday routine. I scrutinized the kitchen to check what I could cook. The worms in my stomach were already complaining. Rice was waving at me in the container where I kept it.

"Urgh! Not rice. I can't be eating rice every day", I said to myself.

Beans also stared at me, but, I couldn't imagine how many hours I would have to wait for it to be done.

My eyes met with that of Indomie. I only had four remaining. "Oh no! Going to the market to buy Indomie is not in my budget for now", I whispered to myself.

There and then, I saw the food I disliked the most calling unto me with a smile on its face. I shrugged, there was no other option.

Humbly, I picked up my cup, a sachet of pure water, and spoonful's of

sugar. I poured garri into my cup and added the water and sugar.

Well, there is this kind of mentality that garri is for poor people. Anyone who entered my room and saw me drinking garri would assume that I had no other food to eat, which is not true. Although, I didn't have a good job or enough money, but, I still had some foodstuff in the house, yet, I chose garri over them. That's how our minds are wired sometimes. Many times, we have the money to get better things, good clothes, shoes, and accessories, but, just because we feel we aren't worth enough, we go for the cheaper and lower quality ones.

Well, that's by the way, I settled with my garri and went straight to my laptop to do the real business of the day. Which was?

Watching movies. Exactly. What do you expect a jobless, young lady like me to do? Move from house to house to gist? That's not me. I preferred watching movies to doing any other thing. My favorite was the K-drama series. I could watch movies for a complete six hours without standing up. I switched on my laptop and continued from where I stopped the previous day.

I blushed as I watched the love story between the main actress and her boyfriend. Their love story was romantic. I secretly wished that my

fiancee was that romantic.

Suddenly, something sparked in my head. My fiancée had not called me that day. Immediately, I paused the movie and picked up my phone to call him. I dialed his number, it rang, but, he didn't pick up. I called consecutively for another two times, but, he didn't pick up.

Various thoughts ran across my head. "Is he seeing a lady in his place of work? Is he ignoring my calls on purpose? Is he in love with someone else? No, he can't do this to me", I thought with tears almost running down my face.

I dialed his number again, but, he still did not pick up the call. I dropped my phone in anger and continued watching my movie.

I couldn't fully concentrate, my mind kept ruminating on why my fiancée didn't pick up my call.

Suddenly, I heard a knock on my door. My heart froze. The only person I could think of to be at the door at that moment was my fiancée. He had promised to give me a surprise visit, but, I never thought it would be that soon. "Was that why he wasn't picking up my calls?" I asked myself excitedly.

I hurried to the mirror to look at my face. I cleaned my mouth which had garri on its side. In a second, I tidied the room and hid my garri. I heard the knock for the second time.

"I'm coming", I said and rushed to the door and opened it gently.

Right behind the door was a young pretty girl of about twenty years, Lily.

Lily is the daughter of one of my neighbors. She is the firstborn of four children. Her parents were salary earners, not that rich or poor, but, averagely okay. Since I started living in the compound, I have known Lily's mom and dad to be troublemakers. They would always shout at each other, but, never beat each other. Lily had three other siblings, two girls, and a boy: Linda, Lisa, and Levi. Linda and Lisa were in secondary school while Levi was in primary school. Linda was the only one who was done with her secondary school. She graduated from secondary school about three years ago and had been seeking admission to study Medicine at a reputable Federal institution since then, but, she had not gained admission.

On Lily's hands were the clothes I dried outside the previous day. "It's about to rain ma, and your clothes are dried already", Lily said and gently handed the clothes to me as I allowed her inside my room.

"Thank you so much, Lily. You are such a darling", I said to her.

"You are welcome, ma", Lily replied.

"Lily, are your exams coming up soon?" I asked trying to create a discussion with her.

"Not really. My UTME is coming up in six month's time and my preparations aren't that much yet", Lily replied.

"Well, I trust you. You are a genius. In the last UTME, I remembered that you had 325. Your little preparations goes a long way, but, don't you feel bored at home? ", I asked.

It was just 11:00 a.m. Her parents had gone to work, her siblings had gone to school and obviously, she was the only one at home.

"Bored? I don't feel bored at all. As a matter of fact, I have so many things that keep me busy".

I was amazed at her response.

"What keeps you busy? " I asked.

"Fulfilling purpose. Fulfilling purpose keeps me busy. Isn't that why I am on earth? To fulfill why God created me", Lily said.

That was another shocker.

“How are you fulfilling purpose in your father's house when your mates are in the university, some two hundred level, some, three hundred level studying courses to make them achieve their dreams”, I said to her.

Lily smiled. “I’m living my dream life already. I'm living in God's will. I'm where God wants me to be at the right time. I'm not just waking up and sleeping every day, I'm living in God's plan and making use of everything He has placed in me, making every day count and impacting lives”,

The last word she said hit me.

“But, how do you do that”, I asked.

Suddenly, Lily's phone rang.

"Hello"

"I'll be on my way", Lily said and hung the call.

"Sorry ma, I have an appointment to catch up with", Lily said and turned to go.

“An appointment? With who? Where?” I asked.

"An appointment with some friends in my age group, we are going to impact children in the orphanage. You don't need to have everything before you impact the world around you", Lily said and slammed the door.

I went back to my bed confused. A girl of her age without admission into the university after three years of staying at home, she wasn't depressed, she wasn't sad or isolating herself from others. She carried a beautiful smile all around with a radiant face and an energetic look. How come? It took me a year before I could gain admission into the university and I remembered how miserable I felt within that one year. Now, here is a girl who had stayed at home in an unsuitable condition with her parents, yet, she isn't worried. How come?

Suddenly, my phone rang. It was my fiancée. The anger in me rose as I remembered how many times I had called him earlier.

"Where did you keep your phone since morning?" I asked angrily immediately he picked up the call.

"I'm so sorry dear, I was busy at work", He apologized, but, his apology got me angrier.

"So, you are making me realize how jobless I am to be calling you. Isn't

that it? I am always the first person to chat you up, the first person to call, the first person to message, it's because I'm jobless, right? "I shouted and it was as if more anger hormones were triggered in me as I ranted on.

"I'm the one that loves most, I'm the one that cares most, and you always take me for granted just because you have a job".

My fiancée, Derrick, was stunned to hear my words. He felt I was overreacting.

"Sweetie, calm down. Those words are way too much. I said I'm sorry, I was in a meeting with other staff when you called. Dear, I'm sorry", He begged.

I suddenly burst into tears. It's so funny how I can change from being hot-tempered to being emotional in just a moment.

"Derrick, you don't care about me", I said in tears.

"Of course, I do. You are my world, my future wife, the mother of my unborn children, and the will of God for my life", He said sweetly.

I couldn't stop myself from blushing.

"Eh! Mr. Man, you have come again with your sweet words. Don't bribe

me with those sweet words ooo", I said wiping my tears.

"Trust me, I'm not bribing you. I'm just letting you know how important you mean to me", He said.

" Awwwwwwwwwn! Thank you", I said and we talked on happily. After fifteen minutes of discussing, Derrick promised to call back later and ended the call.

Derrick and I actually met in our NYSC year. We worked in the same place of primary assignment. Derrick was a cute looking guy and he was always full of happiness. He was so cool to communicate with, he was very hard-working and to top it, he was a very spiritual person. We started talking and it didn't take long for us to discover that we love each other. We prayed and we were both convinced that God wanted us to be together. When we were done with NYSC, Derrick got a job in another state and he moved, while, I remained in the state. Our communication has been affected since then, Derrick was always complaining about being busy at work.

I continued watching my movie with happiness written all over my face. Derrick's discussion with me had taken away whatever mood I was in and brought happiness and joy. I smiled endlessly to myself as I

imagined how beautiful our home would be when we get married. I was still enjoying my happy moment when my phone rang. At first, I thought it was Derrick calling back, but was disappointed to see it was my mom calling. I was reluctant to pick up the call at first, but, later decided to pick it.

"Hello ma", I greeted.

"How are you?" My mom asked.

"I'm fine ma", I replied.

"Really? You are fine? You are staying in your apartment jobless when most of your mates are busy in their place of work, yet, you are fine. You are still single when most of your mates are in their husband's house with two or more children, yet, you think you are fine. You don't even have enough to feed yourselves talk less of sending money to your parents, yet, you claim to be fine. Which category of being fine is that?"

"Mom!" I shouted.

"Don't shout at me, young lady. I'm just trying to help your meaningless life. You finished from the university and stayed senseless, unreasonable, and stupid. Go out there, you will see your mates making

ends meet. You just stay useless in your apartment making laziness meet", my mom shouted.

Oh! How I hated being shouted at?

"Mom, but, you know I'm trying my best", I said trying to control my tears.

"Katherine, I'm not seeing your best. Get a job. Get married. Give birth to children. I am not asking for too much. Why must you let the neighbors and other family relatives mock me because of you? Your two elder brothers are in different states with their families working hard and earning great income. You finished your NYSC and stayed back in the city looking for a job. Till now, you haven't found one. Your young brother is going to be done with his degree soon, which kind of example are you laying down for him? Can't you get an online job?",

"It's not that easy. Mom, things are not going to remain like this. Things would change for the better, it's only a matter of time", I said.

"Katherine, nothing is going to change for the better if you don't do something. You don't just wake up and sleep expecting that things will change. Make a move. If you have to meet your friends who are doing well, swallow your pride and ask them about how they are succeeding",

"Okay Mom", I said. I didn't know what else to say.

"If I don't see any positive result, prepare to be frustrated by me. I would frustrate the life out of you, *omo oshi*", she said and ended the call.

Tears streamed out of my eyes freely.

"God, what have I done to deserve all this? My life is a mess. I don't have a job, I'm not married yet, I struggle with a lot of things, my spiritual life is not balanced, my financial status is terrible, I have no friends and all my mom does is to adorn me with insults, My brothers do not care about me, Why on earth is my life like this?", I shouted in tears.

I buried my face in the pillow and cried my eyes out. You don't feel sorry for me, do you? That moment of emptiness, loneliness, and sadness that you can't even comfort yourself. Do you also feel like that too? If yes, you should be able to relate to what I was going through. You should be able to understand why I didn't return to my mom's town to stay with her after my NYSC. Staying back in the city was a way out of the numerous problems I would have faced at home. Being the only daughter of my parents, I'm sure she wouldn't allow me to breathe if I was at home with her.

After crying, I stood in front of the mirror and saw how red my eyes were and how battered my soul was. I pitied myself and the tears continued coming out.

It sounds childish, right? Well, that was the definition of who I was at that moment. I picked up my phone to call my fiancée hoping to get some words of encouragement from him. And guess what, He didn't pick up the call, despite I called three times.

I went back to my bed. I was tired of crying, I had no strength to cry any longer. Oh! If only tears could solve problems, I would have no problems.

I heard a knock on my door. I hurriedly cleaned my eyes as if my life depended on it. I didn't want anyone to see me crying. I moved to the door and opened it. It was Eunice. She was dressed in a beautiful short gown. Eunice was carrying a beautiful smile on her face, but, her expression changed when she saw me.

"Katherine, what happened to you? Have you been crying?" She asked concernedly.

"Me? Crying? Why would I be crying? For what?" I said.

"But, your eyes look red", Eunice said.

"Oh! That? Don't mind it? I'm fine", I lied.

"So, what's up? Where are you going?" I asked her.

"To my boyfriend's house. I'll be coming back on Sunday", Eunice said.

For a moment, I felt jealous of her. She was lucky in her relationship.

Mine wouldn't even pick up my calls talk less of inviting me over.

"So, you are planning to leave me alone", I asked.

"No, I'm not planning to leave you, I am leaving you here", Eunice said with a mockery smile.

"So, you want me to stay here bored and lonely?" I asked her.

"Not at all my dear, you can go to church", Eunice said to make jest of me.

But, it made sense. Going to church. We had a church program that evening, but, I wasn't the type that attended church during the week except for Sundays.

"You are right. I should go to church", I said.

"Good for you. See you. I'll bring you ice cream", Eunice said and

laughed as she walked away.

Eunice could be a jerk whenever she wanted to be, but, she was friendly. I closed my door and returned to my bed. It was just 3:00 p.m. and the church program was going to start by 4:30 p.m.

"I still have enough time to prepare for the program", I said to myself and went back to watching my movie.

Just like a second, it was 4:00 p.m. already. I screamed as I hurriedly shut down my laptop to prepare for church. The way time flies sometimes eh, is unexplainable, especially when you need much time.

In less than twenty minutes, I was done and completely dressed in a pink top and black skirt. I tied a black scarf around my head and wore a peach sandal. I picked up my bag and set out to go to church. The distance between my house and church was twenty minutes if I were to trek. I wouldn't dare trekking if I wanted to get to church early. I hated getting to church late. It's either I get to church on time or I don't go at all. That was how far I hated getting too late to church. I set apart some amount of money out of my purse for transport.

As I stepped out of my room, I came across one of my neighbors, Steve. Steve was heading to his car, he was going out.

I greeted him quietly and walked past him. He called me back.

"Are you going out?" He asked.

What sort of question was that? He saw me dressed up and with a handbag in my hands, yet, He was asking if I was going out.

"Sure, I'm on my way to church", I replied.

"Oh! That's great. What would you say to a ride?" He asked.

"Sure", I said and he led me to his car.

His car was very neat and beautiful.

He opened the door for me and I sat in. He got inside the car and drove out of the compound.

Music was softly playing in the car. He looked at me for two seconds and faced the road back. "Was he thinking I would start a discussion first", I thought to myself.

Steve had been my neighbor for more than a year, but, then, it was just a good morning, good afternoon relationship we had. He was a single hard-working guy, he looked mature and was richer than the middle level, but then, I was not the sanguine type who would be interested in knowing everyone.

"I'm going to drop here", I said as we got to my church.

He stopped the car without saying a word. I was beginning to get scared.

"What kind of person is this? Not even a word?" I thought angrily.

"Thank you very much", I said and attempted to open the door.

He stopped me and looked into my eyes, "Katherine, you have an awesome personality, but, despite we live in the same compound, I don't know you that much. What would you say to a dinner in my house tonight?",

I was tongue-tied for a moment. "Steve, wanted me to come for dinner at his house", I thought. It didn't even make sense to me.

"I'll see if I can make it", I said and got out of his car.

Chapter 3

I walked into the church and they had started worship already. I hated missing praise and worship in church, I don't know about you. To me, praise and worship helped me to see different dancing styles in the church and also add mine to it. Praise and worship in my church was always a joyful one.

The atmosphere in the church was supernatural. The lead singer was singing the worship and pouring out all her emotions. The keyboardist also did a perfect job and the tunes sounded heavenly. Although the church wasn't filled up like it used to be on Sunday, but, there were many people in the church.

I looked around and saw people; ladies and guys, women and men, worshipping God with their whole hearts. It wasn't even about dancing this time around, I saw people in tears, crying and adoring God. I tried to be serious with my worship, but, my heart was not with God. I had a quick flashback of when I led worship in my fellowship in school; how people worshipped and how some fell under the influence of the Spirit.

I didn't know when I started crying. "God, how did my life become this way. This is not who I used to be".

Honestly, I felt unworthy to worship God. I used to be a very close friend to God, but now, I wasn't better off a stranger.

Probably, people in the church who saw me crying thought I was also truly worshipping God, but, deep down, I knew the tears were tears of regret and disappointment. I wished I knew how I could return to God, but, I didn't. All I knew was that it was beyond me just telling God I was sorry.

The lead singer was still in front lost in what seemed like never-ending heavenly and melodious worship. All I could just think of was, "God, why am I like this".

Instantly, still with my eyes closed, I saw a man with stripes all over his body with blood and water flowing out, tears ran down his face and immediately the tears touched the ground, it turned to blood.

At that moment, I lost my mind and it was as if I was no longer in control of my body, I fell to the floor crying out my eyes with all the strength I had within me.

I'm sure at that moment, the people in the church were looking at me wondering what had happened to me.

There, was Christ still loving me despite I had left him, there was Christ still making me understand that He shed his blood for me and redeemed my life.

I wanted to seriously return to him, but, I didn't know. I could not even behold him, I felt too unholy to even ask for his help.

Some minutes later, the worship ended and it was time to listen to the word of God. The pastor mounted the pulpit and started exhorting the congregation.

"My message this evening is for someone who has lost hope, who is struggling with different things. God sees all your secret tears, He sees your agony and He is willing to help you.

You are probably going through financial problems, emotional pain, and physical disturbance, you have probably lost God. God is saying this evening, Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Whether you are a Christian or not, if you have left him, come back to him. He alone can give you rest. He alone can give you peace, He alone can grant the things you desire. He is able to do exceedingly and abundantly above all the things you can think of.

I don't know what you are going through, but, trust me, Jesus knows it.

Come before His throne of grace this evening. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

He said some other words of exhortation and I felt all the words coming out of his mouth were just for me. After the exhortation, He led prayers and we all prayed together. Soon, the service ended. As the service ended, some of the sisters in the church came over to greet me, they were happy I came around. The keyboardist also came around to say hello. He gave me a handshake and told me he wanted to see more of me in church before he left.

I stood up from my seat, but, I felt within my spirit that there was still something I needed to do, but, I couldn't just place it. I felt like seeing the pastor for help and counsel on major things in my life, but, I didn't want to take time waiting behind for the pastor with the several many others waiting to see him.

As I turned back to go home, I heard someone calling my name. I looked back, it was the pastor.

"Sister Katherine, good evening"

"Evening, pastor",

"How are you doing ma?" He asked.

"We thank God", I replied.

"It's good to have you in today's program. I would love to see you next time. And also, you should consider joining the workforce".

I let out an uncontrollable laughter and we laughed it out together.

"Sister Katherine, the Holy Spirit keeps directing my heart to you. Is there anything you would like to share with me", He asked.

"Nothing, pastor. Everything is going well", I answered immediately.

"Are you sure?" He asked.

"Yes sir", I replied trying to catch my breath.

"Okay then. What about your job hunt? Have you gotten a job?" He asked.

"Not yet pastor. I'm still trusting God",

"Keep trusting Him. He would do it very soon", He said.

"Amen. Thank you sir", I said and bade him bye.

I hurriedly left the church to my house. As I walked down to my house, I wondered what the Holy Spirit told my pastor. The annoying thing was

that I couldn't give myself a reason for lying to him. I was seriously angry at myself.

I got back to my room and unluckily for me, there was no power supply. I sat down on my bed ruminating on the things the pastor had said earlier while preaching.

"God, where do I start from", I said as my mind went back to how much I had strayed away from the purpose of God.

I didn't get any answer. I wasn't expecting any actually.

I decided that put a call across to my fiancée and as usual, he didn't pick up the call. Eunice wasn't around and there was no one I could talk to. My laptop had low power on it, so, I couldn't watch movies.

I felt like talking to someone to free my head. Then, I remembered that Steve invited me for dinner. I peeped through my window and discovered that Steve had his generator on. There was light in his place, Hallelujah!

I hurriedly changed into a mufti; a short pink gown. I sprayed my perfume for reasons I didn't understand myself. I used a little powder on my face and boom, I was ready.

As I wore my rabbit slippers, I thought of something, "I don't really know this Steve guy, what if he does something to me",

"He can't do anything", I assured myself and left for his place.

I got to Steve's house cheerfully and gently knocked at his door. I didn't hear anything. I knocked again.

Well, probably it was due to the noise of the generator. From, the window, I could see the television playing inside, it was on high volume, but, I didn't see him.

I knocked on the door louder than before. No response.

This time around, I wasn't gentle anymore, I knocked with my fist. No response.

Disappointedly, I turned to leave.

"Na by force to eat dinner for person's house when I fit soak garri and drink", I said to myself.

Surprisingly as I moved some steps away from his door, I saw him coming from outside.

"So, the guy no dey house sef and I wan break his door", I thought to myself.

"Oh! Katherine, how are you?" He said as he approached me.

The first thing I noticed before I could answer his question was his appearance, He was in a plain white T-shirt which reflected his broad chest muscles, and a three-quarter-sized knickers, and a nice canvas. The fragrance of his perfume was everywhere. He was holding a shopping bag which obviously contained fruit wines; about two or three: I was that observant.

"I'm fine", I replied gently.

"You arrived a little bit earlier than I thought you would", He said.

I felt embarrassed. My laziness to cook and my desire to have an adventure in his house brought me all that shame.

"No, it's fine", He said immediately as he realized that I was embarrassed.

He opened his door and led me inside.

His living room was really neat and beautifully decorated, I couldn't compare it with mine at all.

"You can have your seat", He said as he moved to the dining to drop the fruit wine.

I sat down watching the television which was displaying a K-drama series that I had watched before. I was not really interested in the movie, I already knew what the ending looked like.

Steve came to join me some minutes later.

"Are you enjoying the movie", He asked.

"Well, I have watched it before", I replied.

"Are you a fan of K-drama series", He asked.

"Well, not just a fan, but, a top fan", I replied smiling as if I had won a gold medal.

"Wow! Interesting. So, tell me, how did the movie end", He asked.

Bit by Bit, I explained to him dramatically to create a sense of humor. He was amazed by my storytelling skills. We continued gisting about other movies and I realized that there were so many movies we had watched in common.

"Is that only what you can boast of? Movies? Are you not even ashamed of yourself? You can't boast of great and wonderful things, a good job, and an innovation you are into, your influence on others, or your spiritual life", something whispered to my mind.

I couldn't place what just said that to me, but, it was obviously an invisible being.

My expression changed immediately and Steve noticed.

"Katherine, what's wrong?" He asked.

"Nothing", I replied trying to put up a smile.

"Okay then, let's go to the dining to eat dinner", He said and led me to the dining.

We both sat down at the dinning. Steve said a little prayer and opened the dishes.

I was expecting to see rice or pasta or yam or swallow food, but, lo and behold, it was pizza and chicken that was on the table; a very big pizza though.

"Is this what I'm going to eat for dinner", I thought. It wasn't that I hated pizza, but, I preferred eating cooked food to junk.

"Do you like it?" He asked.

"Sure", I replied with a fake smile.

I struggled with the fork and knife to eat the pizza and chicken while he

served the fruit wine.

"So, what do you do for a living?" He asked.

"I haven't gotten a job yet, I'm still on job hunt", I replied.

"Oh! I'm sorry about that. Whenever there is any vacancy in my place of work, I'm going to inform you", He said.

"Oh! That's really nice of you", I said.

"You are welcome. Actually, I want us to be closer than this. Would you be my friend? Just friends, nothing else attached",

I didn't know when yes popped out of my mouth.

Steve was really happy. He smiled and made a toast to our friendship.

After that, we continued gisting. He talked about his childhood days, I talked about mine as well.

By 11:00 p.m., I returned to my apartment. I went straight to my bed, but, I couldn't find sleep.

"Am I doing the right thing?" I asked myself.

I got no response. My Bible was lying on the bed. I picked it up and opened it, the first verse I saw read,

" If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (1 John 1:6-7).

The pastor's words in the church program earlier that day came back to me.

"God, I don't know what I'm doing. Help me find you back, Help me walk in your light", I said.

I picked up my phone to call my fiancée, but, as usual, he didn't pick up my call. I angrily dropped the phone and went to sleep.

Chapter 4

It was a sunny afternoon. I was just coming back from an interview with a company a church member had introduced to me. The interview went well and they promised to get back to me, but, as I walked home, I kept thinking of when the job hunt would be over.

As I crossed my street, I saw ladies younger than me driving their cars, returning from their various places of work.

"God when?" I said and before I knew it, tears were running down my face. I hurriedly cleaned it so that no one would notice. I tried to keep a smiling face as I walked, but, unhappiness was written all over my face.

I was some meters to my compound when I heard someone call my name from behind.

"Sister Katherine", she called.

It was Lily, my neighbor's daughter. She was holding a customized nylon in her hands and she was looking radiant.

I waited for her to catch up with me.

"Lily, how are you? Where are you coming from?" I asked.

"Well, I went to deliver some of my catering products to some shops across the street", She said happily.

"You are into catering?" I asked surprisingly.

" Well, I learned how to make chinchin from Sister Eunice, and I started making mine and packaging it", She said as she showed me the last packet of chinchin in the customized nylon, it was neatly packed and anyone who saw it would be attracted to it at the first sight.

"So, how many have you sold today?" I asked her.

"Ermmmmm, I sold three dozen to the first shop, two dozen to the shop opposite the road, then another three dozen to the shop down the street. That's eight dozen in total", She said.

"Wow, that's incredible. So, how much profit did you make today? ", I asked.

"I made #1600.00, two hundred naira per dozen",

"Wow, that's amazing", I said, but, deep down, I was feeling ashamed of myself.

A young girl who was not a graduate yet was earning one thousand, six hundred naira per day, yet, I was going out every day searching for a job.

For a moment, I felt like starting that same kind of business, but, on the other hand, it was not my type of thing. I had no interest in catering, besides, I couldn't stress myself by going from one shop to another to sell my products. I just wanted to work in my own office where I would sit down with the air conditioner switched on listening to music softly and doing my work.

"Lily, you are doing a great job. Keep it up", I said as we entered our compound.

"Thank you ma", she replied and we went to our different apartments.

I got inside my room and sat on a chair. I removed my shoes and went straight to my bed lying face down still in my official dress.

I whimpered like a baby, "God, why is everything working well for everyone, but, it's not working for me. Even Lily, who isn't a graduate yet, is doing well. Eunice is doing well. Lilah is doing well. Why is my life like this",

I was still complaining when I heard a knock on my door. I hurriedly cleaned my tears and stood up from my bed.

"Who is at the door?" I asked.

"It's Lily", She said and I opened the door for her.

"Oh! Lily, what brings you here?" I said with a big fake smile on my face as I allowed her in.

"Well, my mom went out with the spare key and locked the door, and there's no other way I can get in. Can I stay with you till she comes?" Lily asked.

"Sure, why won't I allow my adorable little darling to stay with me", I said smiling, but, honestly, I meant the opposite, because, I didn't have any food at home that I could offer her. I was preparing to soak garri for lunch and I didn't want to give her that.

Suddenly, I remembered I still had some noodles.

"What should I offer you? Rice? Beans? Yam? Eba? Amala? Or NOODLES?" I said stressing the noodles.

"Nothing ma, I'm fine", she replied.

I heaved a sigh. "Have a seat", I said to her.

She sat down on the chair, while I sat on my bed.

I had to start a discussion with Lily if I didn't want her to get bored and of truth, there were so many things I wanted to ask her.

"Lily, when is your UTME coming up?" I asked her.

"It's in six months", She replied.

"Lily, you amaze me. This is your third time writing UTME and you haven't been able to secure admission into a higher institution, yet, you carry happiness all around you. You don't feel weighed down at all. There is this joy all over you that you carry about. Despite your being young, you have your business. The last time you came here, you said you were going to an orphanage to some other people to impact the orphans. Lily, what kind of person are you? Don't you have problems", I asked.

I was expecting Lily's mood to change, but, she kept on smiling.

"Everyone here on earth encounters one difficulty or the other, but, mine has made me stronger", Lily said.

"Wow, tell me more", I said.

"Well, growing up as a child wasn't easy. My parents weren't that rich, they were just salary earners and they had me and my siblings to take care of, our school fees, feeding, and rent swallowed all their salary and before the middle of the month, it was always like we were struggling to

survive. I had different health challenges as I got sick most of the time. Mom was worried, she almost gave me out to one of our relatives when I was eight, but, Dad advised her not to.

My only consolation was academics, I would read at every opportunity I had. I wanted to be a medical doctor and bring my family out of poverty. I lived my life with that hope.

I didn't know God then, I was just a churchgoer, but, I loved the church activities. I remember waking up early on Sunday mornings before my parents and siblings just to get to church early. I would always participate in the Bible quiz and other competitions in the church and I always won. Yet, my life seemed meaningless.

In my first year in senior secondary school, I had new teachers, but, one of them particularly picked interest in me. She would call me after class and speak to me. She was friendly. She taught me a lot of helpful things apart from academics. She taught me how to behave, how to relate with my mates, how to relate with the opposite sex, and most importantly, she led me to Christ",

“Really?”,

“Yes, ma. That was the best gift she gave me; leading me to Christ. My

life changed around for good. I started living with a purpose. I knew I couldn't afford to live my life anyhow. I discovered purpose in Jesus. I started a very close relationship with Him by praying to Him every day, reading His word, and fellowshiping with His other children. I wanted everyone around me to be saved as well. I told them about Jesus at every opportunity I had. My teacher didn't stop with me on that, she taught me how to maintain my relationship with God and how to make sure my fire never goes off. I started ensuring that every second, minute, hour, and day counted. I started influencing the lives of people positively and God has been showing up for me", Lily said.

"Wow! I honestly don't know what to say. That's super amazing. Your teacher is a great person", I said.

"Yes, she is", she replied.

"Well, it's been years now that you met Christ. How have you been able to maintain a consistent relationship with God? ", I asked.

I wanted to know her answer because that was my major problem. I had once been like her, serving God, fellowshiping with God's children, leading others to God, and making impact, but, after I graduated from the university, life turned around. No more student fellowship, no more

relationship with God.

Lily answered with a smile, "It's not by my power or my strength that I'm still standing today. The Holy Spirit has been helping me a great deal and I have also been very intentional about my life and relationship with Him. I have a mentor who advises me, teaches me, and tells me what to do when I'm confused, I also listen to messages and spiritual songs that edify me from time to time, I also don't joke with the gathering of the children of God, I attend our church weekly programs and Sunday programs, I'm always punctual and I never miss out or stay absently minded. Another very important thing is that I don't joke with the secret place; my personal altar, I communicate with God for one hour after I wake up in the morning. I also pray before I sleep at night. Also, I don't joke with meditating on the word of God, I read my Bible every day. I have been intentional about growing, walking in the light of God, and serving God and God has been helping me. Also, I ensure that I obey God's commandments and the instructions of the Holy Spirit. Holiness is my watchword, without which no man shall see God. And with all that, God has been helping me", Lily said.

"Wow! Thank you so much, Lily", I said finding all that she said really

helpful.

Suddenly, we both heard Lily mom's voice in the compound.

"I have to go now, my mom is around", Lily said and stood up.

"Oh! Thank you so much", I said and bade her bye.

She left the room and I kept ruminating on what she had said.

"Lily is right. I also need a spiritual mentor, I think my pastor at church will do. Also, I need to start listening to godly songs and spiritual messages again. I also need to be attending my church's weekly programs and Sunday programs. I also need to re-ignite my personal altar, meditate on the word of God, and be intentional about growing in God", I said to myself.

I had so many things to work out in my life, but, I had no idea of where to start.

"A step at a time", I told myself and stood up from my bed.

In a matter of days, a lot of things changed about me. I wasn't the same Katherine I used to be. As a matter of fact, I looked like a different person. Things didn't just happen like that, I made so many decisions.

Do you want to know some of the decisions I took?

Well, for a start, I deleted all the movies I had on my laptop, I realized that they were distractions and time wasters. Next, I downloaded Christian songs, movies, and messages from great men of God in the country. Next, I drew out a timetable for my everyday life and fixed a special time for my personal altar. I started waking up early even though I did not have anywhere to go. I would wake up and commune with God for the first one hour, and then, I'll meditate on the Bible. The change in me was amazing.

Guess another thing I did.

"I blocked my fiancée's number.

I felt he was not serious about us and the relationship wasn't going to make any headway. There was no way we could move forward when we couldn't maintain balanced communication for years. Besides, I was becoming affected by his nonchalant attitude about my emotions. I just decided to cut off ties with him for some time. That isn't too harsh, right? Also, I gave more commitment to my data business and online clothes sales and it was doing a little bit fine.

On a particular day, after completing the house chores for the day, I felt

like reading a book. I had exhausted the ones I borrowed from the library. It was then I remembered that Eunice had a collection of Christian books. Her apartment was like a mini library. She had always complained about her dad buying lots of books for her to read. Her dad wanted her to develop by reading books, but, she would literarily read none.

I left my room and moved to Eunice's room to get some books, secretly I wished she had Redeeming Love by Francine. One of my friends made a review of the book on her What'sApp status and the review was amazing and left me with the urge to read the book. I opened Eunice's door and was confounded by the state I met. She was on the floor crying her eyes out. She didn't even make any effort to stop when she saw me. I moved closer to her and knelt beside her.

"Eunice, what's wrong?", I said trying to choose the right words.

Eunice couldn't say anything, tears continued streaming down her eyes.

I reached for the tissue paper in the dining and handed it to her and made her sit on the sofa. I had never seen Eunice so broken like that. I had always known her to be a happy, energetic, and jovial girl. She was the kind of girl whose lifestyle everyone admired, her beauty was one

that every lady was praying for. What could have possibly made her cry?

"Katherine, am I not beautiful enough? Don't I look presentable? Is my character bad?", Eunice asked.

" Not at all", I answered.

" Why is it that every guy who claims to love me ends up using me and dumping me? No matter how much I give myself to them?", She asked.

" What happened?", I asked her.

"My boyfriend just left me. He said it is over between us. After all I have done for him. After all the weekends I have spent in his house".

"It's okay, Eunice", I said.

" It's not okay. He is the sixth guy to leave me this year. I can't continue like this", she said with tears running down her face.

I held her hands. "No, you won't continue like this", I said to her and hugged her.

"I know of a man who truly loves you and will never dump you. His name is Jesus. His love is real. Jesus isn't fake. You can have a relationship with Him. I'm not perfect, I'm just getting things right as well, I haven't been faithful in my relationship with Jesus, but, trust me,

for the past few days, I have been experiencing a joy that has been killing my inner tears. I can bet it with you that life with Jesus is really sweet", I said.

" Thank you", Eunice whispered into my ears.

" I came to pick some Christian books from your library", I said and moved to where she kept her books.

It wasn't up to three seconds that my eyes came across Redeeming Love, I picked it up with delight. I picked some other Christian books.

"This would do for now", I told her.

Mmmm", Eunice replied.

"Eunice, are you still feeling sad", I asked.

Eunice didn't say a word.

I moved closer to her. "This is a phase, you will be fine, okay".

"By the way, I'll be going to church this evening, would you like to go with me? ", I asked.

Eunice nodded to say yes.

" Okay, get ready before 5p.m.", I said and left her room.

As I walked back to my room, my mind went back to those times I had envied Eunice. I envied her beauty and her relationships, I never could have imagined she had things like that going on with her. She had her secret tears too.

Chapter 5

As much as I wanted to develop and build up myself, so many needs started arising, financial needs and even emotional needs. My fiancée, Derrick, was no longer in the picture, I no longer had his contact. I didn't really plan to completely let him out of my life, but, some weeks after blocking his number, I lost my phone. I couldn't find it after returning home from an interview, I went for. All effort to get it back was really abortive, I lost the contact of my fiancée along with that of my friends and family members. I was really saddened about the loss of my phone, but, Steve cheered me up, He encouraged me and told me I could come to his house anytime. We became best of friends, but, he couldn't be compared to Derrick. Derrick looked, sounded, and behaved more mature than Steve. Also, Derrick was more of a Christian compared to Steve who still consumed alcohol and barely goes to church.

Ever since Eunice's boyfriend broke up with her, she had been a regular member of my church, she even joined the choir and was more active than I, who invited her to the church. She had stopped all of her night parties and all her ungodly behaviors. If there was one thing I was sure

of, it was the fact that Eunice had completely changed, but, how she got changed was something I didn't know.

I was becoming a better Christian. The salvation I lost after I left the university had already been restored to me, but then, some things were getting me worried; my joblessness was part of it, I was already tired of going from one interview to another without securing a job. Eunice advised me severally to learn a trade, but, I wanted an office job. I couldn't imagine learning from a fashion designer or hair stylist after dreaming several times of becoming the CEO of a renowned company. It doesn't even correlate.

"But, you have to start from somewhere", Eunice told me on a particular evening when we raised the issue of joblessness.

"Eunice, I studied Economics in school for complete four years, I did my internship and did NYSC for a whole year. Does it even make sense that I start learning a trade now", I told her.

"Katherine, it doesn't have to make sense. I studied Chemical Engineering at the university for five years and presently, I'm a caterer and I earn money from catering, does that change what is written on my B.Sc certificate? Katherine, don't just stay idle, do something", Eunice

said.

" Well, I'm doing something. Going for interviews is part of something and very soon, I'm also selling data to people and publicizing clothes online for sale and earning little from that. I'm sure that I'll get a job", I replied.

" Okay then. Let me go to my room and prepare for church", Eunice said.

" It's just 4:00 p.m. by the time", I said.

" Katherine, Bible study starts at 4:30 p.m. The distance between our house and the church is around fifteen minutes, I have less than fifteen minutes for myself, when do you expect me to get ready? Abeegi, I'll see you in the church", Eunice said and stood up to go.

" Won't you wait for me so that we should go together?", She asked.

" The last time I waited for you, we ended up getting to church thirty minutes late even though you personally despise lateness", Eunice said.

" Don't worry, I'll get to church before you today", I said.

" Let's wait and see", Eunice said and dashed out of my room.

Actually, I didn't plan to go for Bible study that day, but, the fact that Eunice was going encouraged me. I stood up from my bed and moved

to my wardrobe to change my clothes and get ready for church.

The Bible study was power-filled as usual. Our pastor emphasized on the importance of purity. He asked someone to read the book of Romans 12:1 for the church, I opened my Bible and read it out.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

"Thank you very much, Sister Katherine", He said and continued teaching us.

" Your body is the temple of God. The word of God calls you a temple, you carry God inside of you. But, when you pollute your temple, you make it a temple for the devil.

When you engage in immorality, it affects you as an individual, it affects every aspect of your life, it opens down your life to the devil, it destroys your destiny, it cuts short your life just as it did to Samson and Absalom in the Bible. Sexual immorality is sinning against your body, abstain from it.

Present your body to God as a living sacrifice, a holy sacrifice and such that is acceptable unto God, that is when your service to God becomes reasonable. It might not make sense to the people of the world, you are not of the world. You are not to conform to the standard of the world. They may tell you that purity is old fashioned, but, Purity is not old fashioned, it's not a form of slavery or bondage, it is the will of God. You can stay sexually pure, some people have kept themselves in the past, some people are still doing it and you can also do it".

As the pastor spoke these words, it was as if he was hitting a hammer on my chest. My mind went to Steve, nothing really much had happened between us, just a few hugs, but, I was getting emotionally attached to him. I was always going to his apartment whenever he was back from work and also always preparing his dinner and breakfast. Getting the foodstuffs wasn't a problem, He was always giving me a large amount of money weekly for my upkeep and to get foodstuffs.

Of a truth, Steve had helped me a great deal, financially and psychologically, but, I wasn't sure if I wouldn't compromise if he asked me to.

I felt within myself that the Bible study for that day was a warning to me

from God not to compromise or engage in sexual immoralities. I listened carefully to the pastor and jotted some key points in my jotter.

- * Watch your thoughts and actions.
- *Don't give room to temptations
- *Set boundaries and act on principles
- *Ask For Help from God.

The pastor said some other things and we all prayed together.

I got home around 7:30 p.m. with Eunice. Although, we ended the church program by 7:00 p.m., but, we were talking all the way home.

"Katherine, today's Bible study made me regret the things I did in the past, how sinful and immoral I was then, but, thank God for Christ, I'm a new creature now", Eunice said to me as we walked home

" True. We do so many things out of lack of understanding. If we really understand the damage that sexual immorality is doing to our lives and our future, I'm sure that no one would ever want to engage in it. You remember that pastor said some spiritual exchange happens during sexual intercourse. I can imagine how many things have been transmitted into so many people's lives through immorality. May God

help us",

" Amen. Katherine, come to think about it, what if Steve wants you to engage in immorality with you? I can sense He is looking for something beyond the platonic friendship between both of you", Eunice said.

" Haba! Eunice! How can you say something like that? Steve isn't that kind of person. He is just kind and really nice. Besides, with what I have heard today, I can never compromise", I replied.

" Okay ooo", Eunice said funnily.

" What do you mean?", I said and playfully tapped her at her back.

"My eyes are on you ooo. Don't fall in love ooo. Remember, you still have a fiancée", Katherine said.

My mood changed. " But, we are no longer together. I have lost contact with him. I've lost my phone, his home address and office address are in the phone I lost and his family member's contacts are also in that phone".

" You mean you don't know where he lives?", Eunice asked.

" He relocated to another apartment earlier this year. I know his previous apartment", I replied.

" What about his parents' house? I thought he had proposed to you",

"Yes, he has indeed proposed to me, but, I haven't met with his parents yet, we were just planning to do that", I answered angrily.

" But, it hasn't turned to fight", Eunice replied playfully.

" You are boring me with your questions", I replied.

" Kathy, I don't think you want him anymore. How is it possible that all of a sudden, you can't find your fiancée again. Can't you find him on social media?"

" He is not a social media person",

" Na wa ooo, God would help you find him",

" I'm not even interested in him again", I confessed.

" I knew it", Eunice shouted. " Katherine, this isn't the time to jump on any other man, settle down first. Calm down. I suspect that you are feeling some mushy feelings for Steve. God has the best for you",

" Thank you", I replied to her and we teased ourselves till we got home.

So, back in my room, I sat down ruminating on Eunice's words. Eunice was actually that.

"Steve is just a friend jare", I consoled myself and switched to novels since I didn't have a phone again. I was still reading novels when I heard Steve's generator turned on.

"Oh my God! I haven't prepared dinner for Steve", I shouted as I rushed and stood up to move to Steve's place. Suddenly, I remembered that I had not changed my dress, I was still in the dress I wore to church. I hurried to my wardrobe and picked a short pink gown. As I was about to wear it, I felt a prick in my mind, but, wore it anyway. I wore my slippers and rushed to Steve's apartment. I opened the door without knocking and met him setting the dining table. That was odd.

"Babe!", He called out and rushed to hug me. I allowed him and the hug was for about two minutes.

"You didn't tell me that you would be back from work earlier today. Were you planning to surprise me", I asked.

" Surprise indeed. This is the real surprise", He said and brought out a package from the television cabinet.

"Oh my God! Oh my God!", I screamed joyfully. It was a new iPhone and the latest in town. I didn't know when I screamed out, "I just love you",

" I love you too", Steve said and moved closer to me. He kissed me without my permission and I couldn't resist him, something we had never done before. Although, we had a few hugs, we had never kissed before. It was so sudden and romantic that I couldn't stop him. He stopped and led me to the dining table with my new phone. As he served dinner, I thought to myself, "Come to think about it, this guy isn't that bad. He is a husband material. He is romantic, he is handsome, He is loving, and he knows how to treat ladies right. He is sweeter than Derrick. Just that I have to work on Him, he still drinks alcohol and He rarely goes to church, He doesn't have the Holy Spirit and He doesn't support speaking in tongues".

" Do you care for more?", Steve asked.

"No, thanks", I replied and my gaze shifted to his pink lips. Oh! I wanted him to kiss me again and again and again. I remembered what the pastor said in church and sharply rebuked myself by slapping my leg without letting Steve notice. Steve helped me turn on some applications and changed some settings, he also taught me how to use some features. We ate together and gisted. I returned to my apartment by 11:30 p.m. with my iPhone feeling very sleepy. Without praying or reading the scripture, I dashed to my bed and slept off.

Chapter 6

My iPhone became my best friend within a week. It was always with me every second, I'd sleep off pressing it and immediately after waking up, it would be the first thing I would go to. There were so many new things to discover on it. I retrieved my SIM card, but, it was difficult getting back the number of some people. I got back some numbers on social media, but, I couldn't get that of my fiancée.

I returned to my airtime and data business. Even if it was just #1000 profit a day, it was something. My relationship with Steve deepened. I started seeing a husband in him. After the kiss we had, I looked up to having more than that. Many times when he was away, I had several imaginations. Several times, I had imagined having him to myself. I had imagined us in bed together. Although, I knew those things were bad, I couldn't stop myself from thinking about them. I would wake up every morning feeling horny and thinking about Steve. There were times I really wanted to stop thinking about him, but, it wouldn't just happen.

Eunice was happy for me when I told her about my new iPhone, but, she warned me to be careful when I told her it was from Steve.

I assured her that there was no interior motive and that it was just an

act of kindness. Within me, I wasn't sure if I was telling the truth. However, that seemed to be the best thing to say to keep Eunice's mouth shut.

It was another evening and I was in Steve's apartment as usual. I had finished preparing dinner. However, Steve was so tired from work that he slept off on the couch while we watched movies together. I laughed at him and continued watching the movies.

I was so engrossed in the movie that I didn't know that time was really gone. When I checked the time, it was 1:08 a.m.

"Oh my Gosh!", I shouted as I stood up from the couch.

That act woke up Steve.

"Oh! I slept off", He said and was shocked when he checked the time on the wall clock.

"Katherine, you are still around?", He asked.

" Actually, I was really engrossed in the movie I was watching that I didn't know that time was gone", I said.

" It's fine", He said.

" So, I'll be on my way to my apartment now", I said.

"No way. It's 1 a.m.", He said.

"We live in the same compound. My room is just some steps away from here", I replied.

" Going to your apartment won't be necessary. My apartment isn't sending you away", He said.

" By the way, which movie were you watching?", He asked.

I started narrating the K-drama series to him and it was really fascinating. We were both seated on the couch. I was still talking when I noticed that his hands were on my exposed laps; the gown I was wearing was really short that it couldn't fully cover my laps.

"What are you doing?", I asked him.

"It won't hurt you", He said.

" I'm not ready for this", I said. It was true that I longed for his touch, but, I wasn't ready. I was still a virgin. I had always dreamt of losing my virginity on my wedding day to my husband. It didn't seem appropriate at that moment. My conscience was really pricking me, but, I wasn't emotionally strong enough to push him away. He laid me down on the sofa and started removing my clothes. I struggled with him, but, he

succeeded in removing short gown. Before I could say Jack, he had already penetrated.

"Stop! Stop! Stop!", I shouted weakly, but, he didn't.

At one point, I didn't try to stop him anymore. I gave him all the pleasure he wanted.

When we were done, he carried me to his bedroom for me to sleep. He laid beside me on his bed and slept off. I could not sleep, I was feeling pains everywhere, my joints were seriously aching me, I had just been disvirgined. I went to his bathroom to clean myself up.

All my dreams of losing my virginity on my wedding day had been shattered. I went back to the bedroom and sat on the bed. I looked at Steve snoring beside me and my tears increased. I remembered everything my pastor taught in church and I felt really ashamed of myself. I had disappointed God, I had disappointed everyone looking up to me. I continued crying for hours. When I checked the time, it was 5:00 a.m. I moved out of his apartment and went to my own apartment.

I had not slept throughout the night and I wasn't feeling sleepy. I continued crying.

"What have I done? What have I done to myself? Oh! Katherine, what have you done? You committed fornication, You have lost your virginity. What have I done to myself?", I said and cried. I couldn't sit up, I knelt down beside my bed and continued crying. I wanted to ask God to forgive me, but, I could not just do it, I felt so filthy and unworthy. I could not even forgive myself.

My iPhone was beside me, it kept ringing, but, I didn't pick up. It was Steve.

I sat down on my bed and tears continued dropping on my face. I decided to look at my phone. I saw his message and read it.

"Babe, I had a sweet time with you. You are hot. You were just giving me different styles and to see that you are a virgin was shocking. Let's do it again tonight. I'll be back earlier from work. Love you"

I burst into another round of uncontrollable tears. Sense started coming to me.

"What did he see me as? A sex worker? This Steve guy wasn't even born again. He rarely goes to church. He drinks alcohol. He commits all sorts of sin and he isn't even God's Will for my life. What was I thinking? That I would change him? Oh! I have lost my virginity to the wrong person", I

said and continued crying.

It was 9:00 a.m. and I was still sitting on my bed. I was no longer crying, but, my eyes were red and swollen. Suddenly I heard a knock on my door. I was so sure that it wasn't Steve, he should have gone to work. Probably, it was Eunice.

"Come in", I said still sitting.

Lily opened the door and came in.

"Auntie Katherine, what's wrong?", Lily shouted as she saw me.

I couldn't say a word.

"Auntie, talk to me, what's wrong?", She asked again.

Tears streamed down my face again.

"Auntie, in whatever you are passing through right now, whatsoever pain, whatsoever regret, whatsoever humiliation, whatsoever is causing these tears, I want you to know that God still loves you and He is ready to start up again with you", Lily said.

"Lily, I have failed God. I have disappointed him. I'm not sure He can accept me again", I replied.

" Auntie, don't say that. Not only will God accept you, He will take you up as His beloved. Remember, He always leaves the ninety-nine to come back for you. So, tell me, what have you done? Telling someone about it eases your pain", Lily said.

I was not seeing the young girl in Lily anymore, I was seeing a mature lady that I could trust and confide in. Although, she was just twenty, we had the same height and she talked like a mature lady.

Lily came close to me and hugged me, "Let it out now. It's not supposed to stay within you, Let go of your pain",

"I lost my virginity overnight", I confessed.

" What happened? Were you raped?", She asked concernedly.

" It was my fault. I went to a friend's house and forgot myself when I got there. I stayed so late at his place that I couldn't return to my place at night. We were carried away and soon we couldn't control ourselves", I said with more tears dropping from my face. I didn't feel it was important to reveal the identity of Steve to Lily. We all lived in the same compound and I didn't want her to start seeing him as a bad person, because of what happened between us.

"It's fine, auntie. I'm sorry about what happened to you. I might not be able to relate, but, I know it's painful when you lose your virginity to the wrong person. However, God is willing to take you back. You are His daughter and He loves you, He just wants you to confess your sin before Him and He will forgive you. The Bible says in 1 John 1:9 that

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness".

God still loves you, Auntie. The plan of the devil is to destroy your life. He has three aims; to steal, to kill, and to destroy. The only way you can protect yourself from the devil is by staying in God. If you don't return to Him, the plans of the devil over your life might stand. You might feel ashamed to return to God like the prodigal child, but, if you don't return, you might find yourself committing this same sin over and over again. You might find yourself going back to that guy's house over and over again. You might become a sex addict and might totally lose your identity in Christ.

A lot of people have fallen into that same trap of the devil and have not been able to find their way out. Auntie Katherine, you are only safe in Christ, He is your shield, He is your greatest tower that you can run into.

Auntie, you are worth more than all of this. You are worth more. Find your worth. You have a glorious future, you can't afford to play it all away because of pleasures. Jesus still loves you", Lily said and tears were dropping down her face too.

I was already on my knees, "God, I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. Please, take me back",

Lily led me in prayers and comforted me. After that, what she said next shocked me.

"I think there is something that we are forgetting", She said.

"What is that?", I asked.

"Aren't you supposed to take pills to prevent pregnancy, Lily replied.

"Oh! That's true!", I shouted like someone whose sense just started working.

I still had cash on me from the money Steve had sent to me for the week.

"I'll go right away", I said.

Lily followed me to the pharmacy. On our way to the pharmacy, she informed me that her UTME was in two months' time and that she had started preparing. I wished her success.

We got to the pharmacy and I asked for an Emergency Contraction Pill (ECP). The pharmacist looked at me and asked some embarrassing questions.

"What did the doctor prescribe for you?", She asked.

" Well, no doctor prescribed pills for me. It's just that I need a pill to prevent pregnancy", I replied.

"It's fine. We actually keep our client's information confidential here", She replied and picked a drug on the counter for me.

She explained to me how to use it and the right dose. She gave me the bill and I paid and was given my receipt.

I and Lily returned home and I used the pill.

I was really grateful to Lily. She gave me a long hug and left for her apartment.

I spent the rest of the day meditating on the scriptures and praying to God.

In the evening, Steve called my number several times, but, I refused to pick up his call. I knew what he wanted, I wasn't ready to ever go to his house again. That was a personal decision I made after asking for

forgiveness from God.

For the next one week, I didn't call Steve or go to his house. He stopped calling me two days after he disvirgined me.

When it was exactly one week, I saw his message;

"Katherine, you are really smart, aren't you? My intention was to have a taste of you before I relocate to my new place of work in another city. Right from the start, our discussion in my car, the day I gave you a ride to church, I knew you would be hard to get. Spending money on you wasn't my problem. However, I didn't want to force sex on you. I wanted you to give me your body by yourself, which you did. I noticed the way you dressed seductively whenever you came to my place. I noticed the way you enjoyed my touch and the several hugs we had together. I noticed the way you loved kisses. I was just waiting for the right time and it came cheaply. I actually planned to do it with you several times again before relocating, but, after the first time, you received sense. Good luck"

"Jesus!", I screamed.

I quickly wore my slippers and rushed to Steve's house. There were no traces of him, his generator was no longer there. The door was locked,

but, I could see from the window that the house was deserted. I could feel tears almost dropping down my face. Tears I wouldn't like any of our neighbors to see. I returned to my room and allowed the tears to flow freely. I cried out my eyes.

"Katherine, you have really messed up? What have you done to yourself?", I shouted to myself.

I could hear that small calm voice telling me that God had already forgiven me and I needed to forgive myself.

Without knocking, Eunice came in. She was shocked to see me crying. I was pretty sure she wanted to inform me about the evening church program.

"Katherine, what's wrong?", Eunice asked.

Instead of replying, I went straight to her to hug her. I kept crying.

"Eunice, you warned me, I didn't listen".

"Katherine, what's wrong? I just came to accuse you of not telling me that your friend, Steve, was relocating to another place, I saw him packing out of the house this morning. I didn't expect to meet you here crying. What's wrong with you?", She asked.

My tears increased. Only if she knew that the person she just mentioned was responsible for my tears. I knew that Eunice had walked in that very path before and she had become free, so, I knew I could confide in her.

I narrated everything that transpired between Steve and I. Eunice listened to me calmly. She wasn't the kind of person that would start a pity party in such kind of situation.

"Katherine, that was just a phase of your life and I'm happy that you survived. Though, you fell along the way, but, you returned to God. I know it's not easy on your part knowing that all along Steve was just deceiving you, but, just as God has forgiven you, you need to forgive him and forgive yourself as well".

" You mean I should forgive that bastard? He disvirgined me", I cried.

" But, you didn't stop him, did you? Not forgiving him would only add to your pain. You need to move on. God has fought your battle for you, let it go. Release all of the pain from your heart. Release the hurt, the anger, the guilt", Eunice said.

" It's not easy", I cried out.

"I know, just let it go", Eunice said.

I held Eunice's hands and allowed those tears to flow out, I said amidst of tears, *"Lord Jesus, thank you for forgiving me despite everything I have done. It's not easy for me to let go, but, from the depth of my heart, I let go of Steve. I forgive him. I forgive myself as well for putting myself in this mess. I know that you would make my life a message for the world. I trust your plans for me and I love you forever more. Thank you, Jesus. Amen"*

"That was really great", Eunice said and hugged me.

" Eunice, you know I feel a kind of peace in my heart right now. I am chosen not condemned. I have the joy of the Holy Spirit and I'm not ashamed. I am redeemed and my body is the temple of God. I am sanctified and purified. I am a peculiar child and a holy nation",

" Yes! That's the Spirit!", Eunice shouted with joy.

" Thank you dear friend", I said to her.

" All glory belongs to Jesus", She replied.

Chapter 7

I was getting so impatient as I waited in the reception of the hospital's laboratory. I had been waiting for thirty minutes, but, it seemed like a hundred years. It was a week after I forgave Steve. What was I doing in the hospital? Well, two days before then, I started vomiting and felt really dizzy and weak. Also, I had not seen my period that month, and the month it was past two weeks the usual date. Different thoughts were running through my mind.

"Didn't the pill work?", I thought still sitting down in the receptionist.

"I don't have a job yet, how do I want to take care of myself if the tests confirm that I'm pregnant? Steve would not even show up if the pregnancy is real. But, I used a contraceptive pill, or did it not work",

"What if the test comes out positive, would I abort the pregnancy? No, God forbid".

"Oh my mom! My mother would be so disappointed in me. I would have no other option than to go back to the village to stay with her",

"What would happen to my dream of becoming great in life".

I could no longer sit down again. I stood up and started pacing up and

down.

"God, just do this one thing for me. If this result should come out negative, I would never commit fornication again in my life. I would never ever. I would dare. Jesus, I mean I would not try it", I said to myself.

The other people in the receptionist kept looking at me as I paced up and down. Only if they could understand what was going on in my mind. Tears were almost running down my eyes, but, I kept shutting them in.

"Miss Katherine, your result is ready", The laboratory attendant called.

" Eh!", I shouted and walked hurriedly into the room to collect my result.

"Have your seat, ma" The laboratory scientist said.

I sat down, my heart was racing high.

"Congratulations!", He said.

"Congratulations for what? Don't congratulate me", I shouted.

" Congratulations, you are not pregnant. Your result is negative", He said.

" Oh my God! Thank you Jesus", I screamed.

The lab scientist couldn't hide his smile.

"Why did you congratulate me in the first instance", I asked.

" I saw from your personal information that you are still single and you weren't married yet. I also noticed the tension on your face when you came in. I could see that you weren't ready for pregnancy",

" Truly, I'm not", I replied.

" Alright, but, next time, be careful. Don't engage in it if you are ready for a child". " Sir, there won't be a next time. I won't engage in it again till I get married. But sir, I don't understand why I keep seeing these symptoms and I'm not pregnant. I have been throwing up for the past two days, I have been feeling dizzy and weak as well", I replied.

"That doesn't mean you are pregnant. It could be any medical condition. We would carry out malaria test on you to know the next line of management", He said.

" Okay, would that be done now?", I asked.

" Yes", He replied as he filled out a form for me and directed me to a room where my blood sample would be collected.

I returned home in the evening and had a lot of reasons to give praise.

Although, I was still feeling weak due to the malaria in my body, but, that didn't stop me from singing songs of praise.

God protected me from getting pregnant and from contracting HIV or any other sexually transmitted diseases despite my unfaithfulness. Yes, I did all those tests after Steve left and their results were out, I did an HIV test, Hepatitis, HPV, and other sexually transmitted infections and the results were all negative.

I was still singing praises when Lily came in. She joined me in singing and when we were done, I hugged her.

"Auntie, I came to check on you the other time, but, your door was locked", Lily said.

" Yes, I wasn't in. I just got back some minutes ago", I replied.

" That's great. I'm happy I met you in a good mood", She said.

" All thanks to God", I replied.

"How is preparation for your exam?", I asked.

" It's going on well Auntie Kathryn Kuhlman", She replied.

" Haha, which one is Kathryn Kuhlman again?", I asked.

" Auntie, God is raising a giant in you and that's why He has made you to pass through fire. God intends to make you a great general of our time", Lily said.

" Really?", I asked

" Yes, ma. I had a dream about you. I saw you mending broken pots", Lily said.

" Pots? What does that mean? That I would be a pot mender?", I asked.

" No auntie. The Holy Spirit made me understand that God would use you to mend people's broken lives, He would use you to fix broken relationships, and He would through you beautify the lives of many. He has called you, He has chosen you, He has ordained you, Arise and Shine forth in His glory", Lily said

Tears had become my usual thing in good or bad situations, so, it didn't take a second for me to burst into tears.

"Oh! Thank you, Jesus! Thank you for this wonderful revelation. Oh! This is so amazing Lord. Thank you for revealing your mandate upon my life, I'm grateful, Lord", I worshipped God.

" Lily, thank you for being God's mouthpiece. God will continue to bless

you. You would prosper in all your ways. I declare success in your upcoming exam. God would favor you", I prayed.

" Amen. Thanks for the prayers Auntie", Lily said.

Lily told me about a Bible passage she read earlier in the day, we studied it together and the Holy Spirit gave us insights. We kept studying the Word until it was time for Lily to go home. After she left, so continued studying the Word. Oh! I didn't want to stop despite I had spent hours.

All my life, I had thought my failure in life was due to the limitations I had, I never knew most of my limitations were from my mindset. I rediscovered purpose in life after Lily's discussion with me concerning the revelation God gave her about me.

My prayer life sped up more than ever before, My Bible study life was also on fire. I became devoted to church. I read more books and listened to more messages, podcasts, and audio books.

On a particular day after church evening service, pastor called me and I went to meet him. He greeted me cheerfully and I replied.

"Sister Katherine, there is something I would like you to do for me", He said.

" Really? What's that sir?", I asked.

"There is this lady who is a member of our church, Sister Jemima. You know her right?", He asked.

" Sure, everyone knows Sister Jemima. She is a three-hundred-level student in the university, she just returned last week from school for a three-week break", I replied.

" That's good. I'm happy you know her very well. Her mom came to meet me today, she complained that her daughter's attitude has really changed since she came back from school, she no longer joins the morning devotion at home, and she prefers staying alone in her room than having a good time with her family, Her dressing has also gone bad", The pastor said.

I didn't know why the pastor called me to discuss that, but, I knew he wanted to involve me.

"Sir, I think she needs prayers. Prayers can change anybody sir", I replied.

" She needs more than prayers. I need you to talk to her, a lady-to-lady discussion, and discover what's wrong", He said.

" Sir!", I exclaimed. I never thought pastor could ask me to do that. I didn't know much about parenting or changing people's lives.

"My wife is currently busy with some married women in the church. Most of them are seeing her for counseling and some for dispute settling, I'm currently busy with the church committee as well in preparation for a conference we are having very soon. I don't want to leave the youths and teenagers of the church unattended to and I can't leave everything to their coordinators. I know you are capable with the help of the Holy Spirit. Please, engage Jemima in a discussion and find out what's wrong. God bless you, sister", He said and walked away.

I never expected that. I had no idea on how to approach Jemima. The kind of relationship I had with her didn't even help matters. We were just basically church members and our communications whenever she was around were just greetings; greetings before church service, greetings after church service.

I left the spot where I was standing and tried to look around for Sister Jemima. I could no longer see her again. I mopped all the seats with my

eyes around, but, didn't see any traces of her around. Some youths were hanging around talking, some women were in twos and threes discussing in hushed tones, and some men, majorly the organizing unit, were arranging the church and putting things in place.

I left the church disappointed. "Pastor should have told me about her earlier", I thought.

" Well, that's not a big deal. I'll see her at the next service", I replied myself and plugged in my ear pod, and started listening to chants by a gospel music minister as I walked home. I felt an urge to pray for Jemima as I walked home and in hushed tones, I prayed in the spirit as I walked home.

The next day, I went to the market to get some essentials, one of my uncles had sent me money earlier in the week. I also had a little change with me from the airtime and data business that I was doing. As I walked around the market, I saw new clothes of different designs, but, the reality of living in hunger made me look far away from them. I bought rice, beans, noodles and garri, maggi, salt and vegetable oil. I bought pepper as well. I was about to leave the market when I remembered that I didn't have detergent again at home. I turned back

and headed to a store where it was sold. I was almost there when I heard someone call my name. I looked in the direction where it was coming from. I couldn't recognize the person from afar, but, the voice was similar.

"Who could it be?", I asked myself.

She came nearer and I realized it was Jemima, yes, the same Sister Jemima.

"Sister Katherine, good afternoon", She greeted.

" Sister Jemima, how are you? I'm sorry I couldn't recognize you from afar. You look different from how you look at church...", I said before I realized I had said too much. Of a truth, she was looking different from the sister Jemima who would come to church with a long skirt below her knees and scarf tied around her head. She wore a very short gown and her braided hair was really long that it was almost touching her knees.

"I'm sorry for saying that", I said immediately before she could say a word.

"It's fine ma. I learn hair styling and braiding here whenever I'm back

from school", She said as she pointed at a big hairdressing shop beside the store where I wanted to buy detergent from.

"Oh! That's nice. It's really encouraging that you are learning here too and not just relying on your academics alone. I'm sure it's a source of income for you in school", I said.

She smiled and replied, " It is ooo. I style hair for those in my hostel and others from different hostels too, come to my room to braid their hair. Although, it sometimes takes a lot of time, but, I really earn from it",

" That's great, but, how easy is it to balance it with academics?", I asked. I was surprised at how we were both flowing in discussion when we had never had such kind of discussion before.

"It's not easy ooo, but, I'm trying my best", She replied.

" Well done. Can I have your number, probably, you would come to my house to help me with my hair before you return to school", I asked.

"Sure ma, I'll be delighted to", She replied cheerfully and gave me her number. I gave her mine as well and she saved it.

I bade her bye and she returned to the shop. I got the detergents and left the market.

In the evening, I was lying down on my bed looking through my phone. I was actually bored. Instantly, one of the messages of our pastor came to my mind, "An idle man is the devil's workshop. Don't stay idle, Don't stay bored, Don't stay restless, pursue purpose, make impacts in other people's lives, fellowship with God and build intimacy with Him ".

My personal prayers and Bible study was to start in an hour time. I remembered that I collected Jemima's number when I went to the market. I sent a WhatsApp message and in less than two minutes she replied. It made me wonder if she was always online.

"I hope your day wasn't too stressful?", I asked.

" It wasn't too stressful ma", She replied and added an emoji.

"Have you gotten home?", I asked.

She delayed before replying and later replied, "Not yet ma",

"Are you still working at the shop?", I asked.

" No ma. We have closed for today. I stayed back at a friend's house.

She also learns in the shop", She replied.

" Running away from house chores?", I asked and sent a funny sticker.

" No, sister Katherine. I'm very hard-working, but, mummy doesn't

make me feel free at home. She complains about almost everything. She complains that I'm always with my phone, She complains that my dresses and skirts are too short, She complains when I make calls and video calls with my friends", She replied.

" She doesn't complain that you return home late?", I ask.

" She thinks that it's the normal closing time where I work. I try to return home early as well, around, 9 p.m. My friend's house is not far from my house and she lives alone.

"Wow! That's amazing", I replied.

"When will you come over to my house to help me with my hair?", I asked.

" The day after tomorrow", She answered.

" Thanks", I replied.

I moved to What'sApp status and saw Jemima's status. She posted different videos of herself. They were Tiktok videos with different filters and different reactions on her face, it was funny seeing her twisting her lips and sticking her tongue in the music videos that were obviously not spiritually edifying.

"Is this what is trending now?", I asked myself and moved to other people's status.

My alarm sounded. It was time to pray. I placed my phone on flight mode and knelt to pray.

Chapter 8

"This is so beautiful. I can't wait to see how it's going to look when you are done", I said to Jemima.

" I'm happy you like it already. I derive joy in making hair", Jemima said playfully.

She came around to my house to make my hair as she promised. I offered a bottle of soft drink which I had gotten earlier from a store in the neighborhood. I had prayed for two hours before she came to my house. Truly, my pastor told me to speak to her, but, beyond that, I was seeing myself stepping into the ministry God has called me into. I felt a great level of peace and joy within me as Jemima walked around my house. She flowed very well in our discussion and we related like biological related sisters.

"So, tell me, what other thing do you derive joy in doing?", I asked.

" Well, listening to music, watching romantic movies, traveling to places, talking to my boyfriend... ", She said and immediately shut her mouth realizing that she had said too much.

"It's fine. It's nothing to hide", I said smiling.

Jemima smiled, " Auntie Katherine, you are sweet. You see not like my mom who thinks I am too young and not matured to have a boyfriend. She complains every now and then",

" Really?", I asked interested to know more.

" Yes, Auntie Katherine. I was trying to be open to her, so, I showed her my boyfriend's picture and told her about him. She immediately rejected him and told me to stop speaking to him",

" Did you stop?", I asked.

" Me? I didn't stop ooo. Mummy wouldn't stop disturbing me whenever I pick up my boyfriend's call or she sees his message. She doesn't understand what love is since she lost my dad several years ago".

" Oh! I'm sorry about that",

" It's fine. Mummy complains about everything about Alfred. She complains about his hairstyle, his dressing, and his looks. She claims he is a Yahoo boy, but, he is just into online businesses. I tried to explain to her that Alfred is a gentleman, but, she wouldn't listen. Isn't he cute?", She said showing me Alfred's picture.

In the picture, he was dressed in a white T-shirt and crazy jeans. The

jean was torn in numerous places. He had dreadlocks on his head and he wore sneakers.

"I can't get over this picture. He took it on one of our outings", Jemima said sheepishly.

I heaved a sigh and smiled.

"Jemima, do you love Alfred?", I asked.

"Of course, I do. I love him with all my heart", She replied.

"Is he born again?", I asked.

"Well, he goes to church. He is in the drama unit in the church",

I didn't want to confuse her feelings, so, I smiled and silently prayed to the Holy Spirit to help me.

"Are you ready to get married to him?", I asked.

"No ooo. I'm just in three-hundred level. I want to graduate, go for my NYSC, and start working before I get married", She replied.

I wanted to ask her why she was dating him when she wasn't getting married anytime soon, but, I knew that I needed to apply knowledge.

"Does he truly love you?", I asked.

"Yes, he does ooo. He doesn't have another girlfriend", She replied. She had already finished making my hair by then.

"Thank you for the beautiful hair. I love it", I said.

" Anything for you sis", She said as she sat on the chair in my room.

" Back to our discussion, are you very sure that he loves you and he would marry you?", I asked.

" Why not? I'm the only one he has", She replied.

" Can we test him then", I asked.

"Test him? How?", She asked.

"Give me his number. I'll give him a call in your presence", I said.

" Alright. I trust you", She said and typed his number on the phone.

I called the number and after it rang for some seconds, he picked up the call.

"Hello!", I said putting the call on loudspeaker for Jemima to hear.

"Hello, who is this?", He said in his baritone voice.

" I'm Katherine, the auntie of your girlfriend", I said.

" Which of my girlfriends?", He asked.

Jemima looked at me with mixed expression.

"Your only girlfriend that you took out last week", I said.

" Oh! You be Dorcas' auntie? Why Dorcas con give you my number. I tell her say I want marry her? We just dey have fun ooo. No be say I wan marry her", He replied.

Jemima's jaw dropped. It was as if the room was spinning around her.

"Who do you want to marry then?", I asked.

"I neva meet the pesin wey I go marry. I still want to enjoy my life", He said.

" You sabi anybody wey be Jemima", I asked.

"Na one of my babes be that. The mumu loves me daku", He said.

Jemima snatched my phone from my hands and hung up before bursting into tears.

"Jemima, you are not a baby or a secondary school teenage girl, stop crying", I persuaded.

" Auntie Katherine, you would not understand. That idiot made me

think that I was the only one in his life. He told me several times that he couldn't survive without me, but, instead, he has been sleeping around with other ladies. I hate him", Jemima said and continued crying.

She suddenly picked up her phone and dialled a number.

"Hello", She said angrily.

"Hello, baby. How are you? You would not believe that I haven't eaten at all today because I have not heard your voice. I miss you", Alfred said from the other end.

" Liar! Bastard! So, you have been sleeping around with other ladies, yet, you claim to love me. Who is Dorcas?", Jemima shouted.

" Dorcas? I don't know any Dorcas ooo", He said.

" Would you shut your lying mouth? Your secret has been exposed. I now know how you flock around other ladies when I'm not around. I'm done with us", Jemima said and hung the call.

Jemima continued crying and I moved closer to her to console her.

"Sorry, dear. You would be fine", I said.

" Auntie Katherine, you can't understand. I love him. I really love him. I'm not sure I can live without him. I have sacrificed a lot for this

relationship. I started dressing to please him when I noticed he was attracted to girls who dressed that way. I cook and wash for him. I lost my virginity to him. Where do I start from?", Jemima asked.

" Start from Jesus", I said and held her hands.

We prayed together and at one point, Jemima was on her knees crying as we prayed. I didn't know if she was crying because of the **breakfast** or because she wanted to reconnect with Jesus, but, she cried so much and even told Jesus that she wanted to start all over again with him.

She felt refreshed when we finished praying and she gave me a deep hug.

"Thank you so much, Sister Katherine. Thank you for bringing me to Jesus", Jemima said still hugging me.

We talked for a while and she returned to her house.

That night, I felt really emotional. The same ME that was jobless and useless brought someone to Christ? The same ME that was careless and lost my virginity to Steve? Jesus is really merciful and good. He can transform anyone. That was a big plus for me. I was really joyful and proud of myself. It was just as if I had won a gold medal.

Pastor was happy with me that I was able to help Jemima, but, he had another assignment for me. A bigger one actually and money was also involved this time around, an amount enough to feed me for weeks, several tens of thousands.

What kind of project do you think it was? I'm sure that you can't guess that correctly. Pastor actually pointed out the fact that there were some groups of people in the church, mostly, teenagers and young adults that were not dressing modestly. He paid me the money in advance and gave me three weeks to execute the project, to bring this group of people to start dressing modestly. How does that sound to you?

I got home and kept the money in my wardrobe, I couldn't bring myself to spend a dime out of it because I had no understanding of how to execute the project. Would I have to meet them one by one and persuade them to dress right or meet with their leaders who had no power or influence over them? It was unthinkable that my pastor was asking me to do that. I could not understand what he was trying to derive. I wasn't even a devoted worker, how on earth would I be able to do that?

I had only three weeks and had to do something. I started praying for modesty in our youths and the more I prayed, the more I saw immodesty as a burden in God's heart. It was a great burden that the children of God would dress like harlots in the house of God, that the very youths raised in the house of God preferred extra mini skirts, tight jeans, gowns, and tops that exposes their cleavages and gowns that have splittings up to their thighs. So, it wasn't even about the money. God wanted me to do something and the money was just an incentive.

I kept praying for the next three days and studying my Bible in my small apartment. I couldn't be jobless and purposeless at the same time. God started to reveal to me how immodesty was a scheme of the devil to draw people to himself. The devil has introduced different trends of fashion into the world and it takes a sensitivity to know that some fashion trends are to pollute the atmosphere with lust and immorality. I saw the need for the eyes of the youth to be opened to see how they are offering themselves as instruments of the devil promoting lust in the eyes of those who see them and promoting immorality in the atmosphere. Truthfully, most of them feel beautiful and fashionable in these new trends of fashion, but, the standard of God can not be changed and His standard for His children is that they adorn

themselves in modest apparel. Everything started to make sense as the Holy Spirit ministered to me. I wasn't really an advocate of modesty, but, I loved dressing that way. I loved my body well covered and I had these beautiful gowns my mom got for me when I was entering school, they made me look like royalty and immodesty was not even an option for me because I didn't like to make myself uncomfortable. Why would I put on extra tight clothes and find it difficult to bend down to pick something in public or have my body tightened by the clothes? However, before then, I did see modesty as important as it was.

The next evening service, I went to meet my pastor after the service and told him about what I received from the Holy Spirit. He nodded his head with a knowing smile. I asked him for permission to hold a meeting with the youths of the church. I didn't have any date in mind. He told me of the upcoming youth conference in the next week and told me I could have a one-hour session with the youths. I was really excited, but, scared as well. What was I going to tell them? Yes, I had received a lot from the Holy Spirit, but, I was to minister to them in just a week time. It wouldn't be my first time to minister to people, I did that a lot when I was an executive in my school fellowship, but, it had been a long time. Pastor could see fear written all over my face. He encouraged me and

prayed for me.

It was just as if time was flying, before I could say Jack, it was already a day to the youth conference. I prayed for three hours and it seemed just like a few minutes. God started to speak to me. He told me of some youths who had not been able to access what He had for them because of their immodesty, He told me some of them were doing that because their peers were also doing it and some were doing that to satisfy their boyfriends, I remembered myself and Steve, I remembered the way I dressed to Steve's apartment in the night. My heart ached as I remembered how I gave my body cheaply to Steve. Although, I had covered the pain, but, I was still hurting.

The Holy Spirit continued talking to me, "I know that you are still hurting and I'm here to heal you and to use you to transform many lives and to deliver many people from taking steps that would truncate their destinies. Katherine, I would use you mightily to set many youths free from the bondage of the enemies. As the Holy Spirit ministered to me, tears kept dropping from my eyes. The presence of God filled my room and I could feel His love overwhelming me. I wasn't qualified to be used by God, but, in His love, He had called me and qualified me. I kept praising His name and I was ready for the conference.

Chapter 9

The conference was power-packed and I had not seen the Spirit of God move in that way in a long time. The session I ministered in was beyond my imagination. The topic was MODEST and BEAUTIFUL. I was dressed in a purple A-shaped gown that was below my knee and a fascinator on my head with black heels on my legs. I looked like royalty. I explained how God sees us as royalty and His children and doesn't expect us to dress like bastards. I made the youths understand that we are a chosen generation and a royal priesthood. My dress was an evidence to them, I was modest and still beautiful. I started explaining how it was a burden in the heart of God that His children were presenting themselves as instruments of the devil building lust and immorality in the atmosphere all in the name of looking good, fashion, peer pressure and relationships.

Honestly, the Holy Spirit took over and he started convicting souls. I could see you that were ready to start dressing like royalty. I had not made an altar call yet when people started coming out to kneel and crying to God to forgive them for their immodesty and immorality.

Right on the stage, I remembered what Lily once said to me about

seeing me mending broken pots. I could see again that God was still interested in using me to mend these people's lives just like he mended mine. After the conference, the pastor shook my hands and prayed for me from the depths of his heart.

After the conference, we started seeing changes, all those who dress immodestly to church started dressing modestly. Infact, we didn't have any records of immodesty again. For me, that was mission accomplished.

Sitting opposite the pastor right in his office, I was completely speechless. I didn't know what He wanted me to do again. It was after a church service. He had asked me to see him, but, for the first five minutes I spent in his office, he didn't say anything apart from reply to my greetings and asking me to sit. Of course, he wasn't just sitting down and staring at me, he was looking through a book on his table.

Finally, I decided to break the silence. "Were you trying to buy modesty for your church's youth by paying me?"

He burst into laughter, an uncontrollable one actually and I felt embarrassed, well slightly embarrassed.

"I figured out that you would ask one day", He said after laughing. "

Well, modesty is not like a commodity that is sold or bought from a person, it can be taught, it can be learned, but, it takes commitment or the Spirit of God to convince a heart to switch from immodesty to modesty. It was a burden laid on the church that some people were dressing immodestly and God kept laying you at my heart whenever the burden arose. The money I gave to was an incentive to encourage you, but, not for the work itself and I'm very glad with the way God used it. Beyond that, He is ready to use you the more"

" What do you mean, sir?", I asked him.

" There is a call upon your life. God is sending you as a guide to the teenagers and your young adult. Beyond modesty, most of them are confused, they are in the wrong relationships, doing the wrong things, they need direction, and some need healing from emotional wounds. You are an extension of God's reaching hand to them"

I could feel goose bump all around my body. " What am I supposed to do?", I asked.

"Follow the instructions of God. That's just it. God has everything all planned out, all you need is to follow His instructions, but, are you ready to be an instrument in God's hands? Are you ready to walk in the

purpose that He has been calling you to for a long time? Are you ready to give yourself to Him and do just His will? Are you ready to share with the world the message that God has made out of your mess and how He has selected you as a vessel unto honour in your imperfections?"

I was in tears and on my knees. " If God can be interested in using a person like me, then, why would I not give myself? Lord, I'm ready. I'm ready, Lord", I cried and the presence of the Lord filled the office. I could feel the touch of the Spirit of God and it was electrifying and powerful.

Pastor prayed for me and after the prayers, I returned to the church auditorium.

Eunice was waiting for me in the church.

"You kept me waiting?", She said.

"I'm sorry about that. Pastor had some things to tell me. I didn't expect that I would stay that long as well", I replied.

" Well, I didn't feel bored. I had someone to keep my company, he just left before you came",

" Who!", I asked as we stepped out of the church's building.

"Bro Timothy", she replied and giggled.

"The keyboardist?", I asked looking at her suspiciously.

" Yes. You won't believe it, he works in Azik Company as one of the managers", She said.

" Are you serious? He is working in my dream company. What a humble young man. I have always wondered how a keyboardist could be using his kind of big car. What were you two talking about anyways?', I asked.

"Well, nothing much. He was telling me how today's service blessed him and how He has really been enjoying his relationship with God. I envy him, you know. I wish I had a close relationship with God as his",

" Of course, you can. You can have a closer relationship with God if you are willing and obedient. Also, you must be committed to God. You remember your relationship with your previous boyfriends and how committed you are to them",

" Haba, you wan make jest of me?",

" I'm not. It's just that if you could be committed to a man in such a way, you should be more committed to God".

" I understand now. I'll try my best. Talking about my previous

boyfriends, Katherine, how do you cope?", She asked.

"Cope with what?", I asked

"With your singleness. We are no longer young. Katherine, you would be clocking 27 years very soon and I'll be clocking 26. We are not in any relationships, when would we get married?

Eunice looked straight into my eyes and continued, "Many times, I feel lonely. I feel no one loves me. Look, this is not even about my past, I have been taught and groomed in the church and I know what a Christian relationship is supposed to be. I keep fantasizing about when I would have a Christian marriage and my husband and I would hold hands to pray in the morning when we wake up and in the night before going to bed. When is that going to come to reality?"

"Very soon, Eunice. Be patient and keep trusting God", I said and held her hands.

We kept talking till we got inside our compound and moved to our different apartment.

There was a great burden in my heart and the only thing I could do at that moment was to pray. I could feel what Eunice was going through,

because, I was going through the same. It was true that I had forgiven Steve and I was already in my healing process, but, I still felt lonely.

There was a part of me that was still scared of entering a new relationship because of my previous experience with Steve, but, there were also times that I had sleepless nights thinking about when the perfect will of God would come. My mom was already tired of me and she was no longer asking.

As I meditated on all of those things, the Holy Spirit brought to my heart how important it was to find purpose before finding a partner. That was it!

That was what God was doing with me! That was the journey He was taking me through. To find the purpose of my life at that particular season before finding a partner. I started praying for Eunice and I, that God would help us to find purpose. I kept praying and the more I prayed, the more I received strength to pray further. I prayed for about two hours and studied my scripture before finally going to bed.

The next morning, I woke up by 5a.m to have my prayer and Bible study. Early rising is one of the most important things I had learned in the church from my pastor and even though, I would be indoors all day, I

still disciplined myself to rise early.

I finished my devotion around 6.m and after that, I cleaned my room and arranged everything that needed to be arranged. I took my bath and cooked breakfast; boiled yam and fried egg with sauce. I was done with all that by 8 a.m. The Holy Spirit started speaking to me about the essence of planning my day to prevent time wastage and engaging in unnecessary things. For me, there wasn't much to do and I didn't see the importance of planning my time. The Holy Spirit made me see that I had 24 hours in a day like every other person and I could have a purposeful and fulfilling day by planning the smallest of tasks ranging from laying my bed, doing the house chores, taking my bathe, cooking, my devotion time, going on social media, watching movies, reading books, searching for job vacancies and allocating time for all of those. I agreed and took out my jotter and pen. I wrote down everything I wanted to do.

8:00 - 8:20 a.m : Eat breakfast and wash plates.

8:20 -8:30 a.m : Post a What'sapp status for my clothe and data business

8:300 - 10:00 a.m : Read a book, God's General by Roberts Liardon, and listen to music.

10:00 - 12:00 a.m : Watch the latest Mount Zion movie.

12:00 - 1:00 p.m : Go to Eunice's house to assist her with her baking.

1:00 - 2:00 p.m : Prepare semo and vegetables for lunch and eat lunch.

2:00 - 4:00 p.m : Listen to the latest message of Apostle Joshua Selman and make jottings.

4:00 - 5:00 p.m : Search for job vacancies online

5:00 - 6:00 p.m : Prayer and Bible Study Time

6:00 - 7:00 p.m : Stroll around my area coupled with a prayer walk

7:00 - 8:00 p.m : Reply my messages on social media and check for updates.

8:00 - 9:00 p.m : Cook and Eat Dinner.

I paused and looked up as if I was looking at the Holy Spirit, " Are you sure this is going to work?".

"It depends on you. You can decide to follow through with the tasks and manage your time. I completed my To-Do-List.

Surprisingly, it worked and I was able to do almost everything I had on the list apart from strolling out, Eunice called me around that time to

help her cut out chinchin. She had a special order the next day and I didn't want to say no to her. Her business was really thriving.

Late in the night, I was alone with the Holy Spirit again in my room. I started worshipping God and I didn't plan to do that, I was just listening to a song by Dunsin Oyekan and I started worshipping. The presence of God filled my room and I couldn't get myself to stop. It was a very beautiful moment. The Holy Spirit started talking to me. He told me to start an online group where I would coach the youths; teenagers and young adults about modesty, relationship issues, and fulfilling purpose. He also told me to start doing short videos on those subject matter with my iPhone and post them on social media.

I was shocked. I wasn't a pro in all that He said, I was just learning. The Holy Spirit told me that He was going to teach me what to do. The Holy Spirit dropped a Bible verse in my heart: Exodus 3:11-12

I picked my Bible and read aloud: Exodus 3:11 And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

3:12 And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the

people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

I didn't know when tears began to drop from my eyes. Despite all the mistakes I had made in the past and all the years I had wasted, God was still interested in making me an instrument to reach out to a lot of people. That was it? That was what my pastor had been trying to tell me. Oh! What a merciful God. I kept on worshipping God and from there, I moved to praying for God's help and strength.

After praying, I moved on to check my messages on What'sApp. I came across my elder brother's message. He barely messages me, but, he calls once in a while. The content of the message was shocking. In the message, He greeted me and asked for my account number. Without hesitating, I sent it to him.

In less than ten minutes, I saw an alert on my phone of a large amount of money. The money was much more than some people's salary and it was enough to buy a iPhone. I called my brother right away to appreciate him. He announced to me that He won a building contract of millions of naira. I appreciated him and we talked for a while before he ended the call.

"That's the money you need to set up the equipments you need for your

short videos", The Holy Spirit said. I was extremely shocked.

Truthfully, I needed some things for the Short videos that the Holy Spirit told me to start, but, I didn't know it would come that fast. I needed lights, a microphone, wallpaper, a tripod stand, and some other things and it just came like that. I was extremely happy. I picked up my phone, went to my playlist, and played a Mercy Chinwo's song; Wonder.

Chapter 10

Abba's Own was fast developing and before my very own eyes, we were in thousands. Let's go back a little bit. Some weeks after I received instructions from the Holy Spirit to start an online platform for youths, I launched Abba's Own. I informed my pastor about it and he publicized it in church to the youths in my church. I shared the link to our youths page and almost all of them joined on Telegram. They also helped me by sharing the link with their friends. I told Lily about it and she supported me too. She created flyers, a branded logo, and several graphic designs for Abba's Own. Well, for the name, the Holy Spirit gave that to me.

We started holding teachings biweekly and the outcome was amazing. I got the equipments I needed for quality short videos and I commenced my short videos. It wasn't difficult to produce the videos, I loved speaking and Lily taught me how to edit my videos using Capcut, Inshot, and other apps. I started doing short videos and by the help of God, I was passing inspiring and godly messages across with the short videos. I was sharing it on my Instagram page and also with the youths from Abba's Own online platform.

My business also boosted and I got an online mart for selling modest clothes. I made a deal with one of my church members that was sowing clothes and she started sowing them, while I was selling them. The mart was to encourage people to dress modestly and many people were actually patronizing me. I started earning tens of thousands daily. Life was getting better and my online followers were growing.

One particular day, the Holy Spirit led me to talk about heartbreak and I did a funny one-minute video on it. I posted it on my page in the night and slept. The next morning I woke up and observed my devotional time. After my devotion, I decided to check through my social media handles. I checked my IG page and a shocker was lying there, waiting for me.

50k LIKES! 50k likes on the video I posted the previous night. The highest I had ever had was 10k likes. I had about 15k people following me on IG and It was just six months after I started posting my videos. That moment I knew that it could only have been God. I couldn't stop praising God.

One of my church members messaged me and told me there was a vacancy in Azik company. Honestly, I didn't know when I started

laughing. It was more than obvious that it wasn't God's will for me to work in Azik Company, God himself had employed me. Whoosh! All those times that I have been chasing jobs in different companies, it was simply because I had not discovered purpose. Walking in purpose is really beautiful.

Then it happened! I made my first million. How? Ever since my video went viral, business brands have been messaging me and calling me to represent their brands. I agreed to some of them and the pay was mind-blowing. And yes! I made my first million and kept making more. I bought a car and was taught by a coach in a driving school.

My mom was so happy when I told her how money was coming in, but, even though, I was no longer the broke graduate I formerly was, mom still had an issue with me, my single status. Almost every one of my mates had gotten married, those that were not married were in a relationship leading to marriage, while I had no one. Even Eunice was already in a relationship. Oh! I didn't tell you about it. Well, after a period of friendship of Eunice with the keyboard guy, he proposed to her. It's the same keyboard guy ooo, the one that has a car and works in Azik company. Eunice's catering business was also thriving and she moved to a better apartment. For me, I felt it wasn't time yet to leave

my self-contained apartment, even though, I had millions running in my account.

Back to the single status issue, well the problem wasn't that there were no guys. As a matter of fact, my social status made a lot of guys notice me, and some of them indeed called or messaged to know if I was in a relationship, some of them even attempted friendship, but, I found it very difficult to flow with any one of them. Secretly, I craved to see Derrick again. It was more than a year since I lost his contact, but, I wanted to see him badly.

"The right person would come at the right time", The Holy Spirit kept telling me from time to time.

Then, something happened, Lily fell sick. She suddenly fainted in her apartment and I was sent for. I was terrified, ever since Eunice had left my apartment, Lily had been the closest to me. We talked most of the time and the exciting part was that she had been admitted to study medicine at her choice university and she was to resume in a month, but, I didn't know where was the sickness coming from. Her mom carried her and we headed to my car. Her dad wasn't around.

We got to the hospital and Lily was admitted. I paid a deposit into the

hospital's account. The managing team commenced treatment and it was then that Lily's mom told me that Lily is a sickle cell patient. I was so shocked, I mean she didn't look like it. She was always putting up this bold smile and happy face and she was obviously a smart kid. She didn't look like someone who had that kind of problem.

Lily became conscious the next day, but, she was obviously in pain. I was so pained to see her that way. We got all the medications prescribed. Lily's mom went home to get some things for Lily and take care of Lily's other siblings.

It was just Lily and I in the room. I held Lily's hands.

"Lily, how are you feeling now", I asked.

" I don't know", She said. She was receiving blood intravenously through one hand and fluid through the hand. She was also on intranasal oxygen.

I kept struggling hard to keep the tears forming in my eyes from dropping.

"Lily, you never told me that you are a sickle cell patient. Why did you hide something like that from me?", I asked.

" Sister Katherine, I didn't want you to see me as SS. I didn't want you to see me as a weak and vulnerable person. I wanted to be treated like every other person with other genotypes", She said.

The tears I have been struggling to keep streamed out. "Lily, you are strong. You are not weak. Over the past few years, I have seen the great impact you have made and how hard-working you are. You would get out of this strong, okay", I said wiping my tears.

" Auntie Kathryn Kuhlman is crying", She said and we both laughed.

" I love you, Auntie Katherine", She said.

"I love you too darling", I replied.

At that moment, the doctor came in. He asked if I was Lily's mother. I replied that I was her sister. He examined Lily for some minutes. After that, He turned me and told me that she wasn't getting better and her vital signs were abnormal. He told me that they were going to try their best in taking care of Lily.

After he left, I lost my strength to pray, but, looking at Lily in that condition for a long time, I came back to my senses and knew I had to pray. Didn't the Bible say that and these signs shall follow them that

believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover (Mark 16:17-18).

Right there in the hospital, I laid my hands on Lily's body and started praying for her.

Lily's mom came around and she told me that I could go home to rest and take care of myself. I drove home and bought some fruit on my way home.

Right in the room where Lily was admitted, the doctors and the nurse were going up and down. Intensive cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) was ongoing for Lily. The monitor showing her vital signs kept indicating an abnormality. I could see a nurse administering an emergency injection. It looked like the whole building was turning around. Suddenly, everything was brought to a pause and the doctor announced the time of death. For a minute, it seemed like my brain ceased its operation. I could hear Lily's mom wailing in the background, but, I couldn't force any word of my mouth no matter how hard I tried.

By the time, I could get the words out of my mouth, it was her name that I screamed. As I screamed "Lily", I jolted back to reality.

Everything I had just seen looked real and it was so difficult to believe that I had been dreaming. I looked at the time and saw that it was already 4:00 p.m. I had slept for six hours. I returned from the hospital by 10:00 a.m. and slept immediately after I came back.

The dream came back fresh in my memory and I didn't know when tears started streaming down my face.

"Is Lily dead?", I asked myself. I picked up my phone and dialed Lily's mom phone number. I called her three times, but, she didn't pick up.

It's true that Lily and I are not biologically related, but, she had been a sister to me. We are closer to each other than my biological siblings. She is the true example of a friend that sticks close than a brother.

The thought of imagining Lily in the coffin made my heart to almost cease beating. "Jesus! Help us. Do something! Lily can't die now. She just got admission to study medicine. She still has a lot to do here on earth. God!", I screamed.

I picked up my phone and called Eunice.

"Hello baby girl', She said over the phone and sounded like she was eating something.

"Eunice, there is a problem", I shouted still crying

" God forbid. What's wrong?", She asked.

" I don't know. It's It's Lily. I. I ", I said sobbing in between every word.

"Talk to me, Katherine", Eunice said.

"Ermmm. She wasn't feeling fine. I... We took her to the hospital.... Her condition wasn't getting better. I came home to rest and just now I had a dream that she is dead".

" Is she dead?", Eunice asked.

" I don't know I have been calling her mom and her siblings, but nobody is picking up", I said still crying.

" Didn't you pray for her?",

"I.... I did. I mean, I was praying for her when her mom told me to come home to rest".

" Calm down, Katherine. Lily is a strong lady and God is in control of this

situation. Why don't we just continue praying for her and declare that she would live".

" Okay"

" I would be praying over here. You can also do the same",

" You are right. I'll do that", I replied. Even as a great instrument in God's hands that I have been, I needed Eunice's encouragement and advice to know what to do. I realized that God intentionally blesses His children with the gift of men because no matter how spiritual you are, you would still need someone to reach out to in situations like this or others. We need each other for each other.

My phone rang. It was an unknown number. I picked up the call and realized that it was Lily's brother.

"Ma, can you please come to the hospital right away? My sister is dying and everyone is going up and down",

" Okay, I'll be on my way,", I said and picked up my car keys.

It was difficult to intensively pray as I drove to the hospital. If anyone told me that I could be that restless even as a minister of God, I wouldn't have believed. I had been the one always encouraging others,

but, now I needed encouragement.

I started talking to God as if I could see Him seated beside me in the car.

"God, you have great plans for Lily. She can't die now. She still has a lot to do here. The world needs what she has to offer".

I kept driving and before I knew it, traffic had built up. The traffic was very bad and I was stuck. A part of me was very angry, I wanted to get to the hospital on time, but, I had to continue praying. All the lanes were caught in traffic and I couldn't swerve to any lane, we would move a little forward and stop for a long time, move again a little bit forward, and stop for a long time. It was like that for a very long time.

I kept talking to God to keep Lily. I looked at the time and it was already 6:00 p.m. I tried calling Lily's brother to know the situation of things, but, he didn't pick up his call. Tears were already forming on my face, but, I tried hard to be confident. "Nothing bad will happen to Lily. She will not die", I affirmed.

Gradually, I was getting out of the traffic. There were just a few cars in front of me for me to move to a fast lane. I took a deep breath and I looked at the car by my right side in the next lane. The person resembled someone I knew, but, I couldn't just place it. "This person

looks familiar", I said to myself. I couldn't see him properly because he had sunshades on. As I continued staring, he looked in my direction and looked shocked.

"Probably, he is one of my online followers", I thought.

Content creation had given me more recognition than anything I could imagine and it wasn't surprising anymore to see a stranger by the roadside or in the market who is happy to see me and wants a picture with me.

The guy kept staring at me and suddenly He removed the sunshades he had on.

Derrick! It was Derrick. My heart nearly fell out of my body. The cars in my front moved and I had to move too. I was trying to keep sight of Derrick, but, it seemed like I had lost him.

Soon enough, I was out of the traffic. Along the roadside, the car that I had seen Derrick in was parked and he was standing right beside the car. I parked my car as well and went to meet him.

"Derrick! It's really you", I screamed in surprise.

" Katherine", He replied and Drew me closer in a warm embrace that

lasted for a few seconds.

I was so sure that the passers-by and the people around were looking at the drama unfolding.

"Look, I'm very sorry for what I did and taking you out of my life. I...", I tried to explain.

" Shhhh! That's in the past now. Although, I tried all I could to reach out to you, I couldn't. At a point, the Holy Spirit restrained me from looking for you and started working on my life and making me. Some months ago, I came across your video online and I was shocked at how you have grown. I was tempted to reach out to you online, but, the Holy Spirit restrained me", He said.

" Derrick! You! When did you start checking through social media? The Derrick I know does not even have an Instagram account", I said and laughed.

" You are right. Purpose changed me. I realized a lot of people needed direction in life and social media was a great tool to help people discover purpose. Alongside with my work, I also create content on purpose", He said.

"Wow! That's amazing. Surprisingly, I have never come across you online", I admitted.

"Really!", He exclaimed and showed me his Instagram account. I was shocked to see that he had thousands of followers.

"This is really amazing, Derrick. It's nice seeing you again, Derrick. I would have loved to stay longer, but, I have to go now", I said.

"Are you running away from me again?", He asked.

"Yes! No. I mean no. I'm not, it's just that one of my neighbor's child is in the hospital and in a critical condition",

"Which hospital is that?", He asked looking interested.

"Gateway Hospital. It's about five minutes away from here", I said.

"Wow! That was what brought me here", He said.

"Brought you here? I don't understand",

"My elder brother's wife gave birth yesterday in that same hospital and he needed someone to assist him with some tasks", He said.

"Wooooow! That's amazing. How is the baby and the mother",

"They are both fine. Actually, the mother had a caesarian section done,

but, she is stable",

" That's good news", I said.

" Thank you. Can we go now? I'll drive behind you", He said.

" Sure", I replied and got inside my car.

As I drove the the hospital with Derrick driving behind me, different feelings were welling up inside me. Before I saw Derrick, my mind was completely on Lily, but, after seeing Derrick, it felt like my whole world changed. He looked more handsome, fresh, and richer. The fragrance of his perfume was enough to make me fall in love with him again.

"What's happening to me? Katherine, get a grip on yourself", I told myself.

The thought of Derrick married to someone else or engaged dropped in my mind and it scared my whole being. It had been close to two years since I left him and anything could have happened between then.

Very soon, we got to the compound of the hospital and we both alighted from our cars. I entered the hospital hurriedly and moved to the room where Lily was admitted to. I stayed at the entrance and couldn't move in, the scene was frightening. The doctors were trying to

resuscitate Lily. Everyone was going up and down. Lily's mom was on the floor crying. I didn't know when tears started streaming down my eyes.

Lily had gotten pale and restless. She was also subconscious. Her vital signs were all abnormal. Lily could no longer breathe by herself and she was placed on oxygen. She was also on blood transfusion because her PCV was really low.

Seeing Lily in that kind of condition, I couldn't hold back my tears. This was the same girl who was always there to encourage me, hold my hands, pray with me, advise me, inspire me with her own life, and show me the way to purpose.

I felt a pat on my back. It was Derrick. I had even forgotten that He was right behind me.

"Katherine, you know, in times like this, we decree life and rebuke death, we don't stay weak", He said.

"Derrick, I can't bring myself to pray. I don't even know..", I said and tears flowed from my eyes freely.

"Katherine, you are a woman of authority. You are a minister God.

Katherine, whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Make a decree and it would come to pass",

I walked outside and stepped into my car. Well, if it was someone else, it wouldn't be difficult to pray for them and declare life, but, for Lily, seeing her in that situation was enough to make me weak. She was more than just a friend to me, she was like a sister to me. Thanks to Derrick's encouragement, I started declaring life for Lily and rebuking death. I continued making the declarations and before I knew it, I was blasting in tongues. I must have prayed for about thirty minutes. I opened my eyes and saw Derrick beside my car. My heart skipped a beat. I opened the door and turned to him.

"She is stable now", He announced.

I couldn't hide the excitement on my face. I hugged Derrick immediately, I didn't expect I was going to do that, but, I did that obviously in excitement. After that, we both went inside to see Lily. She was still in a subconscious state, but, her vitals were stable. I hugged Lily's mom and she appreciated me. She told me that Lily's Dad came around and took Lily's siblings home.

Derrick and I went to check on his brother's wife. I congratulated her and introduced myself as Derrick's friend. She gave me a knowing smile which made me feel a little uncomfortable. As we stepped out, Derrick advised that we get something for dinner. It was already 8 p.m. and I was looking really exhausted. We both went to a nearby restaurant and ordered for something light.

"You looked tired", Derrick said.

"Today has been a long day D.", I said before realizing that I was calling Derrick by the pet name I called him when we were in a relationship.

"I'm sorry", I said.

"It's fine", He replied without looking up.

"Derrick, I admit. I made a lot of mistakes. I was naive. I was babyish. I didn't know anything about purpose. I left you because I felt I wasn't getting proper attention from you. I actually regret it now. I did a lot of bad things, fell in the wrong hands, I compromised my stand on sexual purity, and was lost until God found me", I said, and the tears I was struggling to keep freely flowed out.

Derrick held my hands and looked into my face. "Katherine, God works

all things for our God. He allowed our separation for a reason. He needed to break us, mould us, and redirect our steps to the path of purpose. About the mistakes you made, old things are passed away, and all things are become new", He said.

" So, Derrick. So, are you married now?", I asked looking uncomfortable.

Derrick smiled " I would soon be married".

My heart skipped a beat. So, Derrick was engaged. I tried to hide my disappointment.

"Congratulations, Derrick. You deserve the best. Who is she anyways?", I asked.

Derrick smiled again, " She is the lady sitting right before me"

" Derrick, that's an expensive joke", I said with an emotional outburst.

Derrick held my hands and looked into my face, " I'm sorry, love. I was never wrong about the fact that we are made for each other and that you are the will of God for my life. Katherine, I want you to be the mother of my kids, I want you to be the queen in my palace"

" D."

Epilogue

Isn't it amazing that we have a faithful Father who loves us and cares for us? For a long time after university, I was searching for a job instead of searching for purpose. As you have read, my journey was filled with a lot of mistakes and crooked paths, but, you can call me Abba's favorite. Despite my errors, He brought me to the path of purpose.

My journey in the path of purpose did not affect me alone, but, every person around me. I'm always amazed when I look back at many lives I have been able to reach in my journey of purpose. So, a lot of people were awaiting my rising. Infact, God had attached a lot of destinies to my rising. I have wondered several times what would have happened if I refused to follow God and continuing living my old life, I wouldn't be fulfilling purpose or reach out to people that needed my help. Some people that were attached to me would have missed out in God's agenda or God would have had to raise another person to them. The best gift you can give your generations and the upcoming generation is to walk in purpose and influence their lives through it.

You sure want to know what happened to Lily. She got discharged from the hospital a week after Derrick and I reunited. Some weeks later, she

resumed to the university and started studying her dream course. To be sincere, I was concerned about how she would cope in school with her health status, but, she encouraged me and told me that the same God who brought her that far would see her through till the end.

And yes! Eunice got married. She got married to the keyboardist and her wedding was a very memorable one. Her catering business also blossomed.

Well for me, you are right with your guess. I got married to Derrick six months after we reunited. Getting married to Derrick was one of the best decisions I ever made. Today Derrick and I are blessed with two children and we are definitely walking in purpose. If there is one thing I would like to say to you, Seek God and pursue purpose, all other things would work out well.

The End

This book is written by Success Adegbite through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

A simple reminder to everyone; A life without Christ is always in crises. If you are yet to give your life to Jesus Christ, it's not too late, you can surrender your life to him. The Bible says in Romans 10:9 -;That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

If you want to give your life to Jesus Christ, say this simple prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross to take away my sins. I'm sorry for all the wrong things I've done. I ask you to come into my heart and reside there for ever. I'm trusting you right now to make my heart clean and I take you to be my very own Lord and Savior in Jesus' name. Amen".

If you have just said that prayer and believed in your heart, congratulations. Welcome to a new life in Christ. You are now a new creature and old things have passed away, all things are become new.

Now, there are some things you need to start doing:

1.) Praying: You need to speak to God everyday. He is now your father and to have a good relationship with Him, good communication is required.

2.) Reading the Bible: You need to read God's word daily so as to know God better. The Bible says in the book of Psalms 119:11 - Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Reading the word of God and putting what it's says into practice keeps you away from sinning against God.

3.) Fellowship with other Christians : God doesn't want you to forsake the gathering of the brethren. Look for Church of God near you and fellowship with other children of God.

God bless you mightily.

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If this story has blessed or touched your life, do not forget to say a word of prayer for Success Adegbite that the presence of God never departs her life.

Also, for your free gift of love for her or to publish more inspiring novels, your gifts are welcomed in cash and kind.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Beneath the smiles on every one's face and the laughter we see everyday are issues of life and circumstances that brings tears to some people's faces without anybody around knowing not even the closest to them. As everyone navigate through life, some are drowned in the ocean of situations and circumstances, some that are caused by themselves and others that are not self initiated.

Hidden Tears revolves around the story of Katherine, a young Christian undergraduate with life issues surrounding her. Will she scale through. Have an adventurous journey into the world of Katherine as you read Hidden Tears.



ABOUT SUCCESS ADEGBITE

Success Adegbite is a child of God and a great lover of God. She is the founder and president of Becoming a Better Me Foundation, a faith-based non-governmental organization that has helped a lot of people to become better versions of themselves through outreaches, teachings, and publications. Success Adegbite has a burning passion for making impacts and revival in this generation.

She is also a Christian Novel Writer and a Script Writer and has written many books for the enlargement of God's kingdoms. Her books include: Travails Of a Woman, Voice of The Voiceless, The Forsaken Sacrifice, Wrong Side of the Bed and so many more.



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