



BENITA

A POWERFUL CHRISTIAN
NOVEL SERIES

SEASON 3

— ✧ — WRITTEN BY — ✧ —

ANTHONY IJERE

SEASON 3 · EPISODE FIVE

The Prisoners of the Land



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*You have succeeded in capturing his soul. From now on,
his weakness will become our doorway.*

— THE GIRL'S MOTHER

Evans was changing, and at first the others thought it was simply because he had made a new friend. The girl from SS2 had become a regular part of his life, and Evans no longer tried very hard to hide it. Whenever school closed, instead of returning with the other corps members, he would disappear, and sometimes he would be seen walking around the school compound with the girl.

Sometimes they would sit somewhere quietly and talk, and at other times he would follow her toward the quieter parts of the school where there were fewer people around. And of course there was always food, because the girl knew exactly what Evans liked, and whenever she appeared with a food container his face would brighten.

“Evans, you are becoming a full time customer,” Kemi teased him one afternoon.

Evans laughed.

“Leave me alone. At least somebody appreciates me.”

“Appreciates you or feeds you?”

“Both.”

The others laughed, but Kelvin did not, because Kelvin had been watching and noticed changes that the others did not immediately recognize. Evans was no longer as interested in staying with the group, he missed prayer meetings, he disappeared without telling anyone where he was going, and he had also started becoming secretive.

Most importantly, his attitude had changed, and one evening Kelvin finally called him aside.

“Evans.”

“What?”

“Come. I want to talk to you.”

Evans looked at him suspiciously.

“About what?”

“About you.”

“Me?”

“Yes.”

They moved away from the others, and Kelvin folded his arms.

“What has happened to you?”

Evans laughed.

“Nothing happened to me.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

“You don't stay with us anymore.”

“I have things to do.”

“You disappear from the house without telling anyone.”

“So?”

“You are always with that girl.”

Evans' expression changed.

“What girl?”

Kelvin looked at him.

“You know exactly who I am talking about.”

Evans became defensive.

“Why are you monitoring me?”

“I am not monitoring you. I am observing you.”

“Then observe something else.”

Kelvin sighed.

“Evans, listen to me. There is something wrong.”

“There is nothing wrong.”

“You are not behaving like yourself.”

Evans became irritated.

“You people have started again.”

“Started what?”

“You want to control everything I do. If I eat, you complain. If I go somewhere, you complain. If I talk to someone, you complain.”

Kelvin remained calm.

“This is not about controlling you. We are in a place where we have already seen strange things. We agreed

to pray and remain spiritually alert. You are becoming careless.”

Evans stared at him.

“I am fine.”

“Are you?”

“Yes.”

Kelvin looked at him for several seconds.

“Be careful.” Evans walked away. “Don't tell me how to live my life,” he said over his shoulder.

Kelvin watched him disappear, and he knew something was wrong even though he just did not know how deep it had already gone.

THE RIVERSIDE

A few days later the seven corps members decided to visit the riverside because they wanted to get away from the tension that had surrounded them and spend some time together. Kemi was already excited about the trip.

“I am going to make content there.”

Evans was nowhere to be found.

“Where is Evans?” Chioma asked.

“Nobody knows,” Constance replied.

Kelvin frowned.

“He will appear.”

They waited for some time, but Evans did not come because unknown to them he had gone to see the girl. He had become so attached to her that he found it difficult to stay away, and that day he remained with her longer than usual.

Their relationship had crossed boundaries that should never have been crossed, and Evans had opened himself to a level of influence he did not understand. The girl took advantage of the situation, and what Evans thought was affection had become a doorway for manipulation.

By the time he finally left her something had changed, for he felt strangely attached to her and his mind kept returning to her. Even when he tried to think about other things he found himself thinking about her, and he could not explain it but simply wanted to go back.

When he eventually reached home, the girl's mother

came out of the room where she had been waiting and looked at her daughter.

“Well done.”

The girl smiled.

“

You have succeeded in capturing his soul. He will not understand what has happened to him. From now on, his weakness will become our doorway.

— THE GIRL’S MOTHER

The girl smiled, and from that day Evans became increasingly difficult to understand.

I DON’T REMEMBER

When he finally returned to the group they noticed immediately because he walked through the door without greeting anyone.

“Evans,” Kemi called.

He turned.

“Yes?”

“Where have you been?”

“Somewhere.”

“Where?”

“I don't remember.”

Everyone looked at one another.

“What do you mean you don't remember?” Chioma asked.

Evans shrugged.

“I am tired.”

He went into the room, and Kelvin followed him with his eyes because he knew that whatever was happening to Evans was not normal. But whenever he tried to confront him, Evans became angry.

One evening Kelvin tried again.

“Evans, sit down. We need to talk.”

“I don't want to talk.”

“You need help.”

Evans immediately stood up.

“Help with what?”

“With whatever is happening to you.”

“Nothing is happening to me!”

His voice was so loud that everyone became quiet, and Kelvin stared at him while Evans breathed heavily.

“I am tired of all of you acting as if I am a child.”

Nobody answered, and Evans walked away while Kelvin remained seated. He knew that arguing with him would accomplish nothing, and that they needed prayer, wisdom, and understanding of what they were dealing with.

THE OLD BUILDING IN THE BUSH

Later that day the others went to the riverside, and the path was beautiful at first. Tall grasses moved gently in the breeze, and trees formed a canopy over parts of the narrow road while the sound of insects filled the air. Somewhere ahead they could hear the distant movement of water.

Kemi was recording.

“Look at this place,” she said to her phone. “If you people could see where we are right now, you would not believe that this is where we are serving.”

Evans was still absent, and Benita walked with

Constance and Kelvin. After some time they realized they had taken a wrong turn.

“This is not the road we came through,” Chioma said.

Benita looked around.

“You are right.”

The path had become narrower and the trees were thicker, and there was an unusual silence around them.

“Everybody should wait here,” Benita said.

She pointed toward an open area.

“Constance, Kelvin and I will go ahead and see where this path leads.”

They moved carefully, and the farther they went the quieter the surroundings became. Then they saw a building that looked old, with parts of the walls covered with moss and the windows small and heavily protected.

Benita stopped.

“What is this place?”

Kelvin looked around.

“I don't know.”

They moved closer, and at one side of the building was a structure that looked like a cage or a small prison with a tiny opening in the wall.

Constance approached it.

“Let's look inside.”

Benita hesitated.

“Be careful.”

Constance bent down and peeped through the opening, and her expression changed instantly when she saw what was inside.

Benita noticed.

“What did you see?”

Constance could not speak and stepped aside, so Benita looked through the opening and her heart almost stopped. There were two people inside, a woman and a young man, who looked weak with dirty clothes as they sat on the floor of the small cell.

Benita stared, and then the woman looked up and their eyes met.

“Benita?”

Benita covered her mouth.

“Didi?”

Didi sprang to her feet. “Benita!”

Her voice trembled, and John also stood and rushed toward the opening.

“Benita!”

Constance covered her mouth to prevent herself from screaming, and Kelvin stepped closer.

Didi began crying.

“Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus!”

John's eyes filled with tears.

“We thought nobody would ever find us.”

Benita's own eyes became wet.

“Calm down. Please.”

Didi moved toward the small opening.

“Help us!”

Benita reached toward her.

“Don't worry. We will help you.”

“They want to kill us.”

“What?”

“They are going to sacrifice us.”

Benita felt a cold sensation run through her body, and Constance looked at Kelvin because they suddenly remembered what the villagers had told them. A man and a woman, strangers, human sacrifices for the festival.

Benita whispered,

“So you are the people they brought here.”

Didi nodded.

“They said their gods brought us.”

John looked down.

“We don't even know why we were brought here.”

Benita could hardly speak because she suddenly understood something. Perhaps this was why God had sent her to Njaba, perhaps this was why she had

encountered so many strange things, and perhaps this was why she had been unable to ignore the spiritual darkness around the school.

She looked at Didi.

“We will get you out.”

Didi cried harder.

“Please, Benita. Don't leave us here.”

“We won't.”

“They said the sacrifice is coming soon.”

Benita looked at Constance.

“When?”

Didi shook her head.

“We don't know the exact day, but they said the festival has already begun.”

John added, “They believe their gods brought us here for the sacrifice.”

Benita's heart pounded.

“We will find a way.”

She looked at Constance and Kelvin.

“We must.”

R U N

Suddenly they heard footsteps and everyone froze, and Kelvin looked toward the path.

“Someone is coming.”

Benita turned and saw several men appearing in the distance, who were the hunters guarding the prisoners.

“Run!”

They turned immediately, and Benita and the others sprinted as branches struck their faces while they ran through the bush.

“Faster!” Constance shouted.

Behind them the hunters were shouting.

“Stop!”

Nobody stopped, and Benita ran as fast as she could until her foot struck a root and she fell heavily. Pain shot through her knee and her phone flew from her hand, and for a moment she could not move.

“Benita!”

Constance turned back.

“Go!” Benita shouted.

She struggled to her feet, and though her knee hurt badly, fear pushed her forward. She searched for her phone for a second but could not find it, and there was no time so she ran.

The four of them continued until the vegetation began to thin, and eventually they reached a farm road. They did not stop but continued until they were safely away from the area, and by the time they reached the house Benita was exhausted and sat down heavily.

Constance was breathing hard and Kelvin looked back toward the road, but nobody had followed them. For several minutes nobody spoke, and then Benita began to cry.

“Didi is here.”

Benita wiped her face.

“Now I understand.”

“Understand what?” Constance asked.

“Why God sent me here.”

She looked at them.

“I thought this place was only about teaching. I thought the strange things were just things we had to survive until our service year ended.”

She shook her head.

“No. There is a reason we are here.”

Constance held her hand.

“We need wisdom.”

“We need more than wisdom,” Benita replied. “We need God.”

They immediately began to pray, and Benita bowed her head and asked for divine direction.

A PRAYER FOR STRATEGY

“Father, show us what to do. Give us wisdom. Give us courage. Give us a strategy to rescue Didi and John. We cannot allow them to be sacrificed.”

The prayer continued and the atmosphere in the room became solemn, while outside the village was beginning to grow dark and the sound of distant drums could be heard again.

Benita opened her eyes.

“We must save them.”

WHAT ENTERED THE HOUSE

Just then the door opened and everyone turned to see Evans walking inside. They stared at him because his appearance was strange, with disorganized clothes and a tired face, but what caught their attention most was his stomach which was unusually swollen as though he had eaten an enormous amount of food.

Kemi stared.

“Evans?”

He looked at her.

“Where are you coming from?”

Evans stood silently, and for several seconds he did not answer before looking at her with an almost empty expression.

“I don't know.”

He walked past them.

“Evans, wait.”

He did not stop but entered his room and closed the

door, and the others looked at one another without speaking. Kelvin's face became serious because he had seen enough to know that whatever had happened to Evans was no longer something they could dismiss as ordinary friendship.

Something had entered their group through him, and while they were preparing to rescue Didi and John from the hands of the people of Njaba, they did not yet realize that the enemy had already found a way into their own house. Kelvin looked toward Evans' closed door and whispered.

“We need to pray.”

Outside, the drums began again, and this time they sounded much closer.

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END OF EPISODE FIVE

WATCH OUT FOR THE NEXT EPISODE

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ANTHONY IJERE