



BENITA

A POWERFUL CHRISTIAN
NOVEL SERIES

SEASON 3

— ✧ — WRITTEN BY — ✧ —

ANTHONY IJERE

SEASON 3 · EPISODE THREE

They Are Here Again



“

Every devil operating here, I command you to leave this place now, in Jesus' name.

— BENITA

It was a Sunday morning in Benjamin's church, and the service had started with songs of praise followed by worship and the Word of God. The small church was gradually becoming a place where people felt at home, and Benjamin was grateful for the growth he was seeing.

Clara was one of the people who had become deeply involved in the work of the ministry. When she first told Benjamin that she wanted to assist him in the ministry, he had thought she was simply trying to make herself useful for a while, but Clara became surprisingly committed. She attended almost every service and usually sat at the front, and sometimes she joined the ushers while at other times she helped arrange chairs, attended to visitors, assisted with the church records, and participated in almost every activity that needed workers.

She seemed determined to make herself indispensable.

After the service that Sunday, while some people were still outside greeting one another, Clara remained behind to help count the offering and organize the records. When she finished, she went to Benjamin's office, because they had begun having regular conversations after church. At first the conversations were about ministry, then they became personal as they talked about life, dreams, marriage, and the future, and slowly something neither of them had planned began to develop between them.

Benjamin noticed it, and Clara noticed it too.

One afternoon they were sitting in Benjamin's office after a church activity when Benjamin became unusually quiet. He looked at Clara for a moment and then lowered his eyes.

“Clara,” he said carefully, “this is not right.”

Clara looked at him.

“What is not right?”

Benjamin sighed.

“You know what I mean. I already have someone.”

“Benita?” Clara asked.

“Yes. Her name is Benita.”

Clara nodded slowly.

“I know.”

Benjamin looked at her in surprise.

“You know?”

“Yes, I know about Benita.”

There was a brief silence before Benjamin continued.

“I have been meaning to say this for some time. What is happening between us is not something I should encourage. I care about you, and I appreciate everything you are doing in the ministry, but I cannot pretend that Benita does not exist.”

Clara leaned back in the chair.

“Have you proposed to her?”

Benjamin paused.

“No. Not yet.”

“Then what is the problem?”

Benjamin looked at her.

“I will propose when the time comes.”

Clara laughed softly.

“You are not serious.”

“Clara.”

“I mean it. You are not serious.”

She stood up and moved closer to him.

“Can't you see me here?” ... “I am here almost every day. I work with you. I assist you in the ministry. I am spiritual. I am hardworking. I understand the things you are doing. I support you. I am involved in almost everything.”

She looked at herself and then back at Benjamin.

“And you are telling me you cannot see me?”

Benjamin swallowed.

Clara smiled.

“Look at me well. Can't you see my shape?”

Benjamin quickly turned his face away.

“Clara, please.”

She laughed.

“I am only asking you a question. Can't you see me?”

Benjamin knew he was being tempted, and for a moment his heart became unsettled because Clara was attractive, hardworking, and constantly around him. She had also become emotionally close to him, and the attention was beginning to affect him, but Benjamin knew that attraction was not the same thing as God's will.

He stood up.

“All right,” he said. “We will talk tomorrow. It is okay.”

He was not promising her anything and simply wanted the conversation to end.

Clara looked at him for a few seconds before picking up her bag.

“Tomorrow, then.”

“Yes. Tomorrow.”

She walked out of the office and closed the door behind her, while Benjamin remained standing and closed his eyes.

“What am I doing?”

He knew that something dangerous had begun, so he immediately reached for his phone and called Benita. Benita answered after a few rings.

“Hello, Benjamin.”

“Hello, Benita. How are you?”

“I am fine.”

“How are you coping over there?”

Benita was quiet for a moment.

“I am coping, but Benjamin, this place is different.”

“How?”

“There are things here that I have never seen before. The atmosphere is strange. The people have their own customs, and sometimes I feel as if there is something behind what we see physically.”

Benjamin listened carefully.

“Are you afraid?”

“Sometimes.”

“Do not be afraid.”

Benita smiled faintly.

“You always say that.”

“Because you need to hear it.”

He paused.

“Benita, maybe you do not fully understand why God sent you there yet. But you may have been sent there to be a light in a dark place. You should not allow what you see to make you forget who you are in Christ.”

Benita became quiet.

“You are right.”

“I will keep praying for you.”

“Thank you.”

“No, Benita. I mean it. I will pray for you now.”

Benjamin placed the phone on speaker and began to pray.

A PRAYER OF COVERING

“Father, I commit Benita into Your hands. Wherever she is, let Your presence surround her. Let no power of darkness prevail against her. Give her wisdom. Give her discernment... Every assignment of darkness concerning her, let it be frustrated in Jesus’ name.”

Benita closed her eyes as she listened.

“Amen,” she whispered.

Benjamin continued praying.

“Lord, preserve her. Let her not walk into any trap. Let her see what she needs to see and understand what she needs to understand. Use her life to bring people to You. In Jesus' name.”

“Amen.”

When the call ended, Benita remained seated quietly for some time. She did not know that the same land where she was serving was holding two people who were waiting to be sacrificed, and she did not know that Didi and John were somewhere in that same territory locked inside a village prison. She certainly did not know how close their stories were about to become.

THE SEVEN

Benita had already begun her work in the school, for as a National Youth Service Corps member she had been posted to a public secondary school in the area. The principal had introduced the corps members to the teachers and students, and they had gradually settled into their duties.

Benita taught Business Studies in the junior secondary classes and Commerce in the senior secondary school. The school was not large, but it had many students, and the classrooms were old while the compound was surrounded by trees and thick vegetation. The teachers did their best with what they had.

THE CORPS MEMBERS' LODGE, NJABA

HOME TO SEVEN INSEPARABLE YOUTH CORPERS

Among the corps members who had become particularly close were seven of them, namely Benita, Constance, Evans, Kelvin, Kemi, Chioma, and Udoka. The seven of them seemed inseparable because they went to school together, returned home together, ate together, prayed together, and joked with one another.

Evans was the comedian of the group who could turn almost any situation into a joke, although his love for food had already become a source of constant

amusement. Kelvin was different because he was intelligent and observant, and there were times when he would mention something before it happened, which everyone had started noticing.

Kemi was the content creator who could turn almost anything into content, and if something funny happened her phone was already out. Chioma was calm and thoughtful, while Constance was deeply committed to prayer and had taken responsibility for prayer activities among the corps members. And then there was Udoka, who was the shortest among them and also the slowest to understand things, so that whenever something happened everyone usually understood it before him.

Sometimes they would explain the same thing three times before he finally understood.

“Udoka, are you with us?” Evans would ask.

“I'm with you,” Udoka would reply confidently.

“Then what did we say?”

Udoka would pause.

“Wait. Say it again.”

The entire room would erupt in laughter, but despite their differences they cared about one another.

One evening the seven of them were sitting together at home after returning from school, and their conversation eventually turned to one of the students.

“There is something strange about that boy,” Chioma said.

“Which boy?” Evans asked.

“The one in the class who always screams.”

Evans frowned.

“Oh, that boy.”

“He did it again today,” Chioma said.

Benita immediately looked up.

“I know the boy.”

“It happened while you were teaching?” Kemi asked.

“Yes. I was teaching when he suddenly screamed. I asked the other students what was wrong, but they told me he had been doing it for some time.”

Kemi immediately reached for her phone.

“I have a video.”

Everyone looked at her.

“You recorded him?”

“Yes.”

“Play it,” Kelvin said.

Kemi opened the video, and the boy was sitting among his classmates when suddenly he screamed with terrifying intensity. His eyes were wide and he struggled as if he were trying to escape from something nobody else could see, and someone called his name while another student held his arm and the boy screamed again.

The video ended and nobody laughed.

Evans was unusually quiet.

“That is not normal,” Chioma said.

“It looks as if he is seeing something,” Kelvin added.

Benita watched the video again, and she could not explain exactly what she was sensing, but something about the boy's reaction troubled her.

“This place is more serious than we thought,” she said.

Constance nodded, and Benita looked at all of them with a burden in her heart.

“There is something I want us to do while we are here.”

“What?” Udoka asked.

“We need to be spiritually disciplined.”

Evans smiled.

“Meaning?”

“Fasting and prayer.”

His smile disappeared.

“Ah.”

Everybody laughed, but Benita continued with seriousness.

“I am serious. We need to be careful about what we do here. There are things happening around us that we do not understand.”

She opened her Bible.

“Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning.”

She looked at them.

“I believe we need to be disciplined about food while we are here. We should not wake up and immediately start eating every morning. We should spend time in prayer first.”

Udoka raised his hand.

“Why?”

Evans looked at him.

“You need to stop asking questions after everybody has understood.”

“I have not understood,” Udoka replied.

Everyone laughed again, but Benita smiled and explained patiently.

“Udoka, the point is that we need spiritual discipline. Eating excessively can make a person physically sluggish, and a person who is always consumed with food may become less sensitive spiritually. We need to be alert.”

Constance nodded.

“I agree.”

She looked around the room.

“Let us do it together. We can fast during the day and break in the evening according to our strength.”

“From what time?” Chioma asked.

“From morning until about four or later,” Constance replied. “Those who have the strength can continue longer.”

Evans sighed.

“Why am I here?”

Kemi laughed.

“You came here to serve your country, not to eat.”

“Serving Nigeria includes eating Nigerian food,” Evans replied.

They laughed again, but the decision was made, and from that time they became more deliberate about prayer and fasting. Every midnight they prayed, and sometimes they gathered together while at other times Benita, Constance, and Kelvin remained longer after

the others had gone to sleep.

There were nights when the three of them would still be praying at eight or nine o'clock, and sometimes they carried such a heavy spiritual burden that food became the last thing on their minds. Something began to change because their spiritual sensitivity increased and they started noticing things they had previously ignored.

Kelvin's unusual perception also became more pronounced, and Constance often sensed when they needed to pray while Benita began having moments when she would enter a classroom and immediately feel that something was wrong. They did not understand everything that was happening, but they knew they were becoming more spiritually alert.

DRUMS AT MIDNIGHT

Then one night something happened while they were praying, when a tremendous thunderclap shook the entire village.

“Boom!”

The sound was so loud that the windows rattled and everyone jumped up.

“What was that?” Kemi shouted.

They rushed outside and Benita looked toward the direction from which the sound had come, while another rumble followed and the entire village seemed to tremble.

“Is there a storm?” Chioma asked.

Before anyone could answer they heard something else. Deep drums were playing somewhere in the distance at midnight. The corps members looked at one another in confusion.

“What is happening?” Evans asked.

Nobody answered, and Udoka was nowhere to be found.

“Where is Udoka?” Kemi asked.

“He is sleeping,” Evans said.

“Of course.”

They stood outside for several minutes listening as the drums continued, and eventually they returned inside. The next morning they began asking questions and soon discovered that the village was preparing for a

major traditional festival that would continue for several weeks.

During that period masquerades would move through the community, traditional rituals would be performed, and the villagers would carry out practices connected to their spiritual beliefs. The corps members were told that certain traditional spiritual activities would also take place during the festival, and some villagers spoke about ancestral spirits being invoked while others spoke about spiritual powers that they believed would assist them during the celebrations.

The corps members listened with growing concern, and then they heard something that disturbed them even more because they were told that human lives were sometimes required as sacrifices. They learned that male and female victims could be killed and their heads were said to be used in rituals connected with the festival, and Benita felt a chill run through her.

“What kind of place is this?” Chioma whispered.

The villagers also told them about a special festival food consisting of roasted yam and dry fish, which immediately caught Evans' attention.

“Forget the food,” Kemi said immediately.

“I did not say anything.”

“Your face said it.”

Everyone laughed, but Benita remained serious because she knew they were no longer dealing with mere strange customs and there was something darker beneath the surface.

THEY ARE HERE AGAIN

The following day Benita entered her SS1 Commerce class, greeted the students, and began teaching. For several minutes everything was normal, until the boy suddenly screamed.

“Ah!”

The entire classroom became silent and Benita stopped teaching as the boy looked toward the corner of the room with wide eyes.

“They are here again!”

Benita turned.

“Who is here?”

The boy pointed toward the empty side of the

classroom.

“They are here again!”

The students began murmuring, and Benita walked toward him.

“Who are you seeing?”

The boy suddenly tried to run, but two students grabbed him.

“Hold him!”

He struggled violently, but Benita immediately sensed that this was not an ordinary episode. She stood before him and spoke with authority.

“

In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to be silent.

— BENITA

The boy stopped and the room became completely quiet.

Benita continued.

“Every devil operating here, I command you to leave this place now, in Jesus' name.”

The boy's breathing slowed and he became still,

though sweat covered his face and he looked frightened, he was no longer screaming. The students stared at Benita, and she looked around the classroom where nobody spoke.

For several seconds she simply stood there before picking up her teaching material.

“Everyone, sit down.”

The students obeyed, but Benita's mind was no longer focused on Commerce because there was something in that classroom that the boy could see. Something had frightened him enough to scream, and when he shouted that they were here again, Benita knew that whatever had been tormenting him had not left.

That evening when she returned home she told the others everything that had happened, and Kelvin listened without interrupting. When Benita finished, he looked at her with unusual seriousness.

“Benita,” he said slowly, “I think we need to pray.”

Constance nodded.

“Yes. We need to pray tonight.”

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END OF EPISODE THREE

WATCH OUT FOR THE NEXT EPISODE

WRITTEN BY
ANTHONY IJERE