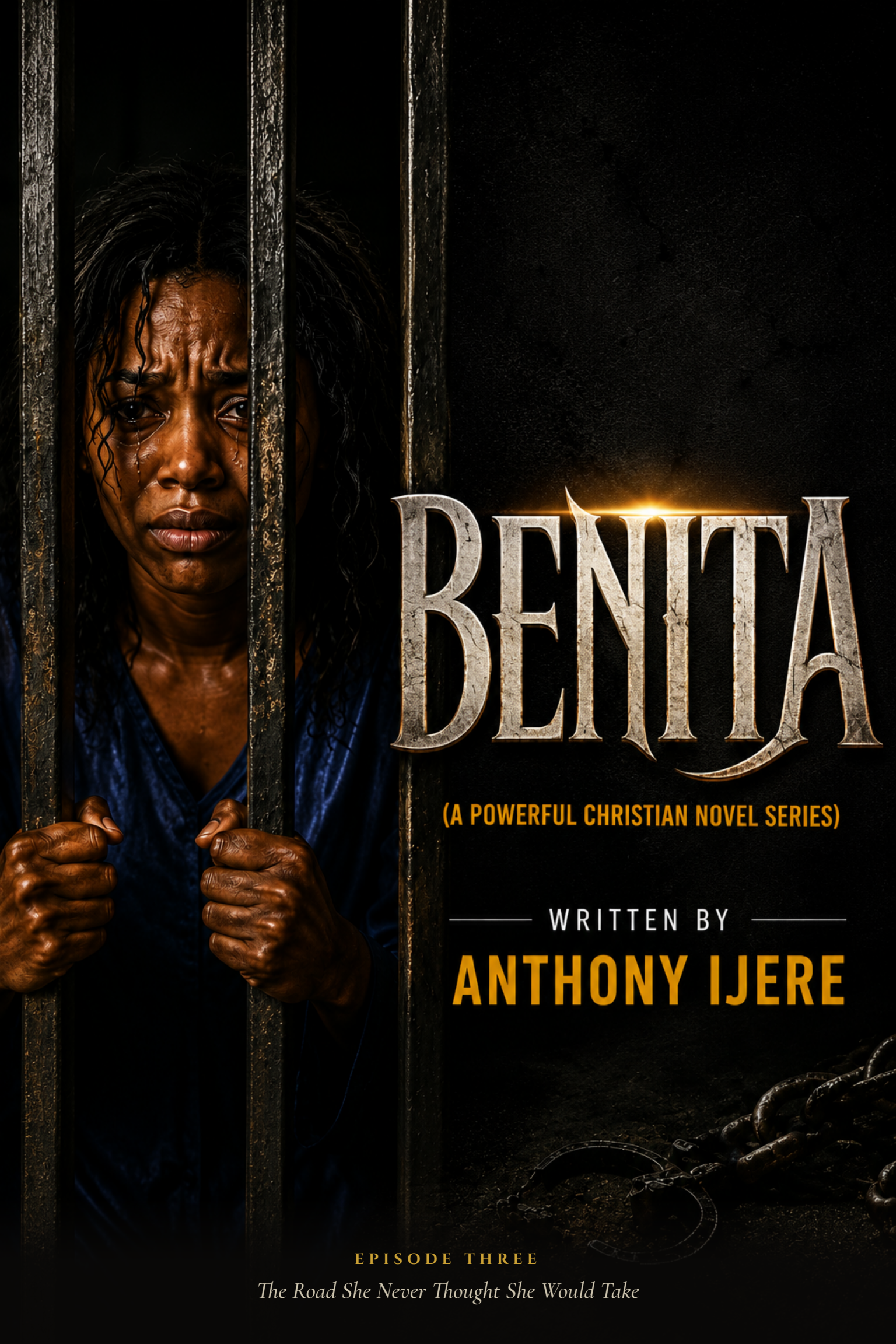


BENITA

(A POWERFUL CHRISTIAN NOVEL SERIES)

WRITTEN BY

ANTHONY IJERE

EPISODE THREE

The Road She Never Thought She Would Take

EPISODE THREE

THE ROAD SHE NEVER THOUGHT SHE WOULD TAKE

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"What the devil advertises, he eventually destroys."

The days passed one after another. The incident behind the classroom gradually faded from the minds of most students, but not from Benita's heart. She still remembered every word Eric had spoken to her. She also remembered every warning Big Mummy had given her in Sunday school.

Deep inside her, a battle had begun. There were days she wanted to obey God completely. There were other days when curiosity whispered louder than conviction.

She often asked herself questions that no one seemed able to answer. Why do people enjoy doing the very things God warns them against? If God says something is wrong, why are so many people running after it? Those questions remained unanswered.

THE CHAPEL PREFECT

One Tuesday during the long break, a young man walked confidently across the school compound with a Bible tucked under his arm. His name was Benjamin Israel. He was an SS3 student and the Chapel Prefect of the school. Everyone knew him.

He was not known because he fought or made trouble. He was known because of his love for God. As the Chapel Prefect, he was always leading morning devotions, encouraging students to attend fellowship, and reminding them to live godly lives.

Some students mocked him. Some respected him. Others simply avoided him because they knew that once Benjamin stopped them, he would certainly speak about Jesus.

His life reflected the message he preached. He was humble. He was disciplined. He was always praying. Even many teachers admired him because of his good character and exemplary conduct.

That afternoon, Benjamin noticed Benita sitting alone under a mango tree, eating the lunch she had brought from home. He smiled and walked towards her.

"Good afternoon."

Benita looked up.

"Oh... good afternoon."

"May I sit down?"

She nodded.

"You're welcome."

Benjamin sat beside her, leaving enough space between them. For a few moments, neither of them spoke. Then he smiled.

"Benita, can I ask you a question?"

She smiled.

"What question?"

"Have you truly given your life to Jesus Christ?"

Benita laughed softly.

"Of course."

Benjamin raised his eyebrows.

"You sound very confident."

"I go to church every Sunday."

"That's good."

"I even attend Bible study."

"Wonderful."

"And whenever we worship, I cry."

Benjamin smiled gently.

"Crying during worship is beautiful."

Benita looked at him proudly.

"So... I have already given my life to Christ."

Benjamin slowly shook his head.

"My sister, salvation is more than attending church."

Her smile faded.

"It is more than crying during worship."

Benita became quiet.

Benjamin opened his Bible.

"The real question is this..."

He looked directly into her eyes.

"Is Jesus truly the Lord of your life?"

She remained silent.

"When temptation comes, who do you obey?"

He continued.

"When God says one thing and the world says another, whose voice do you follow?"

Benita lowered her eyes.

Benjamin's voice became softer.

"The Christian life is not about emotions."

"It is about surrender."

"It is about obedience."

"It is about choosing Christ even when doing so is painful."

His words pierced her heart.

Benjamin continued.

"Satan will always make sin look attractive."

"But remember this."

"What the devil advertises, he eventually destroys."

> *"What the devil advertises, he eventually destroys."*
>
> — Benjamin Israel

Benita swallowed quietly.

Benjamin closed his Bible.

"I don't know why, but I believe God has a great purpose for your life."

She looked at him.

"Really?"

"Yes."

"But whenever God has a great plan for someone, the devil also prepares many traps."

He stood up.

"I'll keep praying for you."

Without waiting for another reply, he walked away.

Benita watched him until he disappeared among the students. She admired his sincerity. She knew he genuinely cared.

Yet every time he spoke, she felt uncomfortable. Not because she hated him. But because every conversation forced her to examine the condition of her own heart.

From that day, whenever she saw Benjamin approaching with his Bible, she quietly took another route. She respected him. She appreciated his concern. But she was not yet ready to surrender every part of her life to God.

THE WAITING SEASON

Months rolled by. Final examinations came. Soon it was time for the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination.

Students spent long hours reading. Teachers organised extra lessons. Parents prayed for their children.

Eric had already graduated from the school. He occasionally sent messages to Benita through trusted friends. She rarely responded.

Her father's warning remained fresh in her mind.

"If I ever hear that you are meeting that boy again, I'll send you to the village."

She feared those words. She did not want to leave her father. She did not want to leave her school. So she stayed away from Eric.

One afternoon, shortly before her final papers ended, Eric managed to meet her briefly outside the examination centre.

"You've been avoiding me."

Benita smiled nervously.

"You know why."

"Because of your father?"

She nodded.

Eric sighed.

"So, what happens now?"

Benita looked around to make sure nobody was watching.

"Please... wait until my examinations are over."

Eric smiled.

"I'll wait."

"After WAEC we'll have enough time to talk."

He nodded.

"I'll be waiting."

FREE AT LAST

The final examination came to an end. Students shouted with excitement as they threw old notebooks into the air.

"It's over!"

"We are free!"

Laughter filled the school compound. For many of them, secondary school had officially ended.

Benita returned home that afternoon, but her mind was elsewhere. She quietly changed her clothes.

Looking into the sitting room, she noticed Benedict lying on the sofa with his eyes closed. She assumed he was asleep.

Without making any noise, she slipped out of the house.

She never noticed that a few moments later, Benedict slowly opened his eyes. He had not been asleep.

He stood up quietly. Keeping a safe distance, he followed her through the streets.

Eventually she stopped in front of a neat bungalow. Benedict recognised the place. It belonged to Eric's family. His heart sank.

He watched from a distance as Benita entered the compound. Without waiting any longer, he quietly turned around and hurried back home.

THE VISIT

Eric welcomed Benita warmly.

"I've been looking forward to today."

Benita smiled shyly.

"I told you I would come."

"I know."

They sat in the sitting room talking about school, their examinations and their future plans. Eric's parents were away from home. The house was unusually quiet.

After some time, Eric brought her a chilled drink.

"You must be tired."

"Thank you."

Without suspecting anything, Benita accepted it.

As they continued talking, she gradually began to feel strangely weak. Her head became heavy. The room seemed to spin around her.

She tried to stand.

"Eric..."

Her voice sounded faint.

"I don't feel..."

THE TRAP CLOSES

Everything around her became blurry.
Darkness slowly covered her eyes.

THE AWAKENING

When Benita finally opened her eyes again, evening had already fallen. She looked at the wall clock. Seven o'clock.

She sat up suddenly. Seeing her dress stained with blood, confusion filled her heart.

She realised that something terrible had happened. She had been disvirgined.

Tears gathered in her eyes. Without saying a word, she hurried out of the house.

Her mind was racing. Fear gripped her heart. She ran all the way home.

THE VERDICT

As she approached the gate, she stopped. Mr. Paul was standing outside with folded arms. His face was filled with anger.

Benedict sat quietly on the veranda. The atmosphere was frightening.

Benita forced herself to smile.

"Good evening, Daddy."

Mr. Paul did not answer. Instead he asked quietly,

"Where are you coming from?"

Her heart began to beat rapidly. She searched desperately for an answer. Finally she spoke.

"After our WAEC papers... some of the students organised a small send-off gathering."

Mr. Paul remained silent.

Before he could speak again, Benedict stood up.

"Daddy..."

Benita looked at him.

He continued.

"She's lying."

The compound became completely silent.

Mr. Paul slowly turned towards his son.

"What do you mean?"

"I followed her."

Benita's eyes widened.

"You what?"

"I saw everything."

He pointed towards his sister.

"She went straight to Eric's house."

Benita felt her knees weaken. She had not known that Benedict had followed her from home.

Mr. Paul's face changed completely. His disappointment was deeper than anger.

"Is this true?"

Benita could not answer. Tears rolled down her face.

"I asked you a question!"

Still she remained silent. That silence said more than words ever could.

Mr. Paul's voice thundered across the compound.

"After everything I told you..."

He held his head in pain.

"I begged you."

"I warned you."

"I trusted you."

His voice broke.

"You want to destroy your life the same way your mother destroyed this family?"

> *"You want to destroy your life the same way your mother destroyed this family?"*
>
> — Mr. Paul

Benita burst into tears.

"I'm sorry, Daddy..."

"Sorry?"

He pointed towards the gate.

"If you cannot obey the rules of this house..."

He struggled to finish the sentence.

"...then leave."

Benita stared at him. She could hardly believe what she had heard.

"Daddy..."

"I said leave!"

He turned away, unable to look at her again.

"I don't want to see you tonight. Go back to where you are coming from."

Still crying, Benita slowly stepped backwards. She looked at Benedict. Their eyes met briefly. Neither of them spoke.

With nowhere to go…

No plan…

No friend beside her…

She turned and began to run.

She ran through unfamiliar streets. She ran past closed shops. She ran until the lights of her neighbourhood disappeared behind her.

Night had fallen. The road ahead was dark.

For the first time in her life, Benita truly understood what it meant to be alone. She had no idea where her feet were taking her.

END OF EPISODE THREE

BENITA · A POWERFUL CHRISTIAN NOVEL SERIES

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WATCH OUT FOR THE NEXT EPISODE

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