

## **BENEATH THE VEIL**

**DAVID AGYEI-YEBOAH**

‘Welcome to Owuooo<sup>1</sup>. We promise you nothing but the pain you deserve. Lucifer kingdom alande.<sup>2</sup>’ Five hooded figures gesticulated to market women. Passersby inched away from them. Some market women screamed when they approached. The way they pronounced the word, ‘owuoo’, their tongues coiling up between their teeth, like snakes, made a few women leap from their workstations and topple over. Kenny giggled. Before those buffoons performed their act, oh, for that’s what it was, they’d approached him thirty minutes earlier to join in and be the sixth member because in their words, he towered, had a broad chest, and would be feared and loved in like measure. He’d declined. Definitely wasn’t ready to partner with Luciferian acting. Pastor Jefferson would not be pleased.

He’d only wanted fruits from the market so he wound up on Ntneh Avenue hoping to grab a few and head back home. KIDI’s music blared through. *I go kill you with<sup>3</sup>. Enjoyment. Enjoyment. Herh.* And then Kenny’s eyes scanned the perimeter. It had been cleared of animals and men. A celestial figure gleamed before him. Weirdly enough, he could hear the bustle of the market. At the same time, he could see the eyes of this being searing through him. It called out to him. Or was it a her? It was about 11 feet tall, with eyes that seemed dunk in fire, robe of magenta and mane of icy-white. Then it fizzled out of sight.

‘Herh, young man, why are you drooling?’

---

<sup>1</sup> Owuo – Death

<sup>2</sup> Alande – Has landed

<sup>3</sup> I go kill you with – I will kill you with

He composed himself. ‘I was?’

‘Why do you look like you just woke up?’

‘Cos I literally just did,’ he muttered. ‘Please hand me some apples and pineapples.’

‘50 cedis.’

‘Ahhbaa!’

‘Herh, enfa saa nkwasiasem no mma ha o. M’aye hye. Se wonto a, ko wo baabi.’<sup>4</sup>

‘Oh, madam, but it’s just apples and pineapples.’ He scratched his head. ‘Alright.’ Carefully removing five crumpled 10-cedi notes, he handed it to the buxom lady and took a bite out of the juiciest apple on his way home.

*What the hell was that? What figure was that?* He couldn’t seem to get the image out of his head as he stepped into his one-bedroom, chamber-and-hall apartment at Teshie.

He knew he had been told he had prophetic gifts. Were they manifesting?

\*

Sundays were always ferocious. There were always blobs of sweat swirling around the room. Pastor Jefferson would boom and lay hands and the congregants would fall dramatically, the

---

<sup>4</sup> I don’t condone such foolishness. I’ve a lot on my plate. If you won’t buy, leave.

ground littered with their bodies, hope-filled, yearning for redemption, manifestation and stolen glory.

Kenny would always munch on apples after service before packing the plastic chairs.

‘PJeff,’ Kenny called out. Pastor Jeff had just returned from escorting the wealthiest member to her SUV and was about sauntering into his office. ‘Something weird happened yesterday. You always told me I had prophetic gifts.’

‘Kenny, my beloved son, I know you saw something strange yesterday. That white figure.’

‘How- dd- id – you - know –’

‘That was me, boy.’

‘Huh?’

‘I’m always watching over you.’

That was the day that Kenny realized that he had to leave Pastor Jefferson’s church. He had always seen the negative signs. Something always irked him, jarred him even, the way people were overly sentimental about his messages and overextended themselves in pleasing him. Then there were those messages he would preach that would shroud the room in fear.

‘Eben didn’t listen to me the last time I advised him. Are you all surprised that a tipper truck split his body into two? Montie afutusem oo.<sup>5</sup>’ A restless calm arrested the atmosphere.

Kenny had always stayed. He needed Pastor Jefferson. Needed his money. His mason job didn’t fetch much. Although he’d graduated top of his class at the university, he’d failed to get any job

---

<sup>5</sup> Listen to good advice.

after graduation. Post-modern Ghana was rough, from the prestigious jobs offered to recent grads on who-you-know-basis to the numerous job applications that required three years plus experience. *Like how?* It seemed like his country just wanted him to lose it.

It was about that time that he roamed from church to church, seeking a solution to his problems. The church at Mamobi hadn't helped. The Pastor there secretly sent him DMs for sexual favors following their exchanging numbers after the alter call. Abokobi's 'Fire for Fire, Brimstone for Brimstone' Ministries hadn't helped a wink either, what with their mortal combat with Satan every Sunday, each congregant armed with boxing gloves. I mean, he should have known. Brimstone for Brimstone? *But desperation had a voice that couldn't be silenced even in the face of danger and hoodwink.* As for Nungua Love Centre, the ushers were so rude; all they cared about was gathering everyone so the pastor could pull congregants onto the floor by sheer force of will. Their violence was staggering. Church culture just generally seemed steeped in mystery and pomp; no depth to satisfy parched souls.

Pastor Jeff seemed genuine the minute he walked into the Community 12 Covenant Family church. But over time, his character unraveled and became unrivaled. It was too late then. Because the money that Pastor Jeff supported him with had become his lifeblood.

But tonight was different; the way Pastor Jeff cocked his head to the side, the way his mustache suddenly marched to a devious tone, arched like a Mafioso's, the way his eyes burned into him. All of a sudden, new scales fell off his eyes. Kenny finally gathered courage and did what he'd felt compelled to even in the face of complete failure. *Step into the unknown with no bulwark.*

Yes, he'd starve for a while but goddamn these pastors. They were clearly not the answer! At least the kind he'd found.

He would find out what his vision meant. On his own.

\*

There was a wide lake before Kenny. He would see a crocodile dip into it and re-emerge a golden antelope. A mouse would sip and emerge a deer. Then he saw that creature again. It stared intently at him and smiled. Then he woke up.

The plates around him clinked. Grains of gari layered the plate like a sickle. Shito<sup>6</sup> lay dotted all over the floor. ‘Shit.’ He looked around and saw the bottle of shito, ajar because of his restlessness during the night, the floor a cream of black and auburn.

His phone beeped.

‘Kenny, we get some job bi for Lashibi oo. Make you make ready.’<sup>7</sup> Diaka, who’d recommended him for his last job, said.

He prepped and within minutes, the flaming sun slapped his back as he carried blocks to an uncompleted building. As he narrowed the curve to the entrance, he saw a group of young women ogling at him. One licked her lips. He wondered how she could be so crude in her opulent expression of desire. Of course, he knew that his body had packed on some muscle from two years of consistent mason work. He also knew it was natural to feel things. But these were teen girls on the cusp of womanhood. They should be ogling at their textbooks. Not him. And the

---

<sup>6</sup> Shito – Spicy black pepper sauce

<sup>7</sup> Kenny, we’ve got a job offer at Lashibi. Prepare.

way they leered, unashamed with longing, eschewing the courtesy to bridle and expunge desire in secrecy or behind a screen was utterly bewildering to bear, to say the least.

‘Kenny, mortar, mortar, mortar!’

He dropped the blocks and picked up the empty ceramic slate before him. One of the girls giggled when he crossed the bend again.

‘You know Kenny, you should stop wondering about those lustful daughters of Eve over there.’

Enningful stifled a laugh, eyes burning bright as he joined Kenny to carry off mortar in his own slate. The dji, dji, dji sounds from the concrete mixer blared through the air as they trudged along.

‘Ah Enning. These are not daughters of Eve. They are daughters of Satan.’

They both laughed heartily.

‘Stop exaggerating. Don’t tell me you’re not enjoying it. I know I am.’

‘Ah, so you too?’

‘Those Gen Z girls have been here since morning oo. Staring at us like we are well glistened trophies. They want a piece of us, chale. We be hot cake. I for make my move soon kraa.<sup>8</sup> Na body no be firewood.’

‘Hahaha. You that. Shocked you haven’t yet.’

‘Biding my time. The longer they want me, the easier my move. They will fall like flies soon.’

---

<sup>8</sup> We’re desirable. I have to make my move soon.

Their laughter echoed in the distance.

‘But eii Enning, how far with the new job applications?’

‘Hmm, brooooo, same old oo.’

Enningful had struggled after school to get a job too. In fact, he met Kenny at a Uniliever interview, they vibed and then exchanged contacts. After both failed to get the job, Enningful began mason work to while away time and make a little money at the side while still applying for jobs. He advised Kenny to join in.

‘Why did we even break our backs to make first-class degrees, hoping that Ghana would open up to us. See the way all these organizations are rejecting us!’ Kenny said.

Enning shrugged right before they reached the mound of mortar that the other masons had rounded.

‘Kenny, I no de barb sef. This country be forking, rough.’<sup>9</sup>

\*

It thundered. Rain poured out of the sky in a flurry dance. A dim mist arrested the bed. Then a blast of white light filtered through the dark. Kenny awakened. Stared into nothingness. There was no one in sight. Suddenly, voices rang out.

---

<sup>9</sup> Kenny, I don’t even understand. This country is so pathetic.

‘Rainbow-whisker, you are chosen! You are chosen! You are chosen!’ Voices uttered. He could hear honey-thick baritones and soaring boy sopranos.

‘Who are you?’

‘Kenny! You are chosen! You are chosen!’

He placed his hands over his ears. Then awoke. A dream within a dream. Beads of sweat paddled across his face.

‘What the hell? This has to stop. All these weird stuff. Naa, naa.’

He picked up his phone.

‘Nancy, I know it’s late. I just have to talk to someone.’

‘Okay.’ Nancy hesitated, groggy. ‘Is anything the matter?’

‘Yeaah. Everything is the matteeeer. Okay, you-you-you wait. Maybe I shouldn’t talk to you about this on phone. I’ll come to your place early tomorrow morning.’

‘You sound terrified. Are you sure we can’t talk now so you feel a bit better?’

‘Nancy, I think I’m losing it! Freakin losing it. Pastor Jeff said prophetic gift or whatever but I think I’m just going coo-koo.’ Kenny’s voice cracked and he began sobbing.

‘You know what? Don’t move. I’m coming over.’

Nancy just lived two blocks away. She was the only female friend he’d made since he moved into his beat down one-bedroom apartment.

\*

‘I keep seeing a super tall and big creature.’ Kenny’s voice was calmer. ‘He looks at me like he knows me. I saw him like I’m seeing you fili fili<sup>10</sup> in the market. Then I had a dream about him the other day. Or her. I don’t know. He seems androgynous. Then just tonight, I heard voices saying I’m chosen. They called me a rainbow-whisker. What the hell?’

‘Hmmm. Let me boil a pot of hot tea for you.’

‘Sure.’

Nancy began walking over to the cupboard at the corner to grab a teabag.

‘Wait.’ She stopped, turned and stared intently at Kenny. ‘Before then, I think you need a hug. A big one.’ She smiled. Nancy always had a way of calming him and stealing a smile out of him, even in the most dire of situations. In the past when Pastor Jeff’s financial assistance delayed, he’d hit her up and she’d loan him some money. Then she’d hug him afterwards. He kinda knew she had the hots for him. He would use it, somehow. In the future. But tonight, all he needed was his friend.

‘Honestly, Nancy, what do you make of all of this?’

Nancy smiled again, and shrugged, ‘I don’t know Kenny. I’m no spiritual person, to be honest. Why didn’t you tell Pastor Jeff?’

‘That charlatan.’ Kenny scoffed. ‘Can you believe he told me that he is that creature.’

---

<sup>10</sup> Fili fili – In the flesh/For real

Nancy burst into uncontrollable laughter. ‘Ah, akoa wei paa.’<sup>11</sup>

Somehow, her laughter comforted him.

‘I need answers.’

‘Clearly. And you won’t get the right ones from him. I always told you he was fake. It doesn’t even take a blind man to see that.’

‘I always knew oo. But na mehia sika no oo.’<sup>12</sup> Hmm. Ghana is sooo hard. But you know, when he said it, it’s like something just came over me. I knew then and there I was done with his ass.’

‘Hahaha. I’m glad about that. Maybe you should go see a genuine prophet in the land.’

‘Prophet?’ Kenny’s eyes widened. ‘I’ve seen so many fake ones, they are all the same to me.’

‘Just as much as there are many fake ones, there are genuine ones too. You never know. What about your friend that you said is now a prophet?’

‘Hmmm.’ He began rummaging through his drawer. ‘Charles. He always seemed like a kind fellow. Maybe he can help me.’ He tore a leaf out of a book and peeked. ‘Got it. Class list, college 2015.’

‘I hope you’re ready for what all this means.’

‘Nancy, I don’t care. I just want all this madness to stop.’

---

<sup>11</sup> Ah, really, this dude?

<sup>12</sup> I needed the money oo.

\*

‘Charlessseeey gbemi.’

Kenny hollered as he noticed Charles seated at the bench in their former Psychology department.

The night sang a quiet song; no one in sight at the department except the two.

‘Brooo.’ Charles got up and hugged Kenny.

‘Don’t call me that no more. I work for the Lord now.’

Kenny lowered his arms, in a symbolic bow to his old friend.

‘Pressure! Hahaha, chale, what have you been up to?’

‘Me? Oh, hmm. Mason work oo. M’asoa blocks saa.<sup>13</sup>’

‘Oh.’ Charles face was etched in a frown.

‘But bro,’ Kenny laughed. ‘That conversation will be for another day.’

‘Okay. You seemed anxious when you hit me up. What dey go on?<sup>14</sup>’

‘Been having crazy visions and hearing weird shit, sorry stuff.’

‘Bro. Flooow.’

Kenny giggled.

‘What are you seeing in your visions?’

---

<sup>13</sup> I’ve carried blocks on my head for so long.

<sup>14</sup> What’s going on?

‘I see a tall figure staring at me like it knows me. Then I hear voices saying I’m chosen. It’s crazy bro.’

‘When you hear these things and see these things, how do you feel?’

‘Uncomfortable. The sounds I was hearing were literally beating my eardrums.’

‘Wow.’

‘Let’s pray a bit.’ Charles spoke in tongues. A frigidty arrested the atmosphere. It tingled Kenny’s skin. He suddenly stared at Kenny, a wildness waltzing in his eyes.

‘Heaven and hell are fighting over you. You do have a divine assignment. But the things you are seeing and hearing are not from God. Your mother’s clan served the enemy in the past. Your father’s clan is the direct opposite. You are destined to be a prophetic painter. You will see things in the spirit realm and translate this to your drawings.’

‘But I don’t even draw.’

‘Be careful of your associations. All the people in your life at the moment have been sent to distract you. Enningful, Nancy are out for blood.’

‘But Nancy. How? She encouraged me to seek you out.’

‘And that’s why I’ll take you out. Before you become what we all fear.’

*Whack, whack.*

Something suddenly hit Kenny’s head from behind and he fell. The last thing he saw were blurry images of Nancy, Enningful and Charles. They sneered at him with eyes of pity and disgust.

Nancy glowered. ‘You were chosen to die. Eventually. We’ll take you to the creature you saw. He has a looot of plans for you.’