

THE PHOENIX; A TALE OF REBIRTH AND REINVENTION (Fiction).

2:50 am. A knock came on my room door.

"Who is that?" I asked myself, sitting up on the bed. The knock came again, calmly. For one reason, I became scared; the person knocking wasn't saying a thing.

As I walked towards the door, I could feel the hairs on my skin standing tall.

"Uncle Deji?" I said as I opened the door.

I gave a perplexed stare at him.

I watched him as sweat strolled down his forehead and trickled down quickly to a halt, on his beard. It was a very cold morning, why was he hot?

"Anything?" I said.

Slowly, I felt something heavy on my chest. It began to move, down to my waist. Everything was happening so fast.

Uncle Deji. His hands were on me. For some reason I don't know, I couldn't say a word, or do anything.

Homosexuals? I had only read about them in novels. I never believed they did exist.

"You stop living, the day you open your mouth!" Uncle Deji said.

From that very moment, I started to die gradually. I felt lost. The overly confident Wole became timid.

I anticipated Uncle Deji's 'ritual', daily. It became a routine.

This death was revealing itself, in everything I did. My academics were suffering. My school counselor invited my parents and me to a counseling session, so they would probably know the cause of my deterioration.

How could I say anything? What I could remember was that, I would die an actual death, the day I speak out.

18 July 2022. 8:00 am.

Some missionaries had come to my school to speak to us.

They spoke with so much emotion and strength...

"No matter what you are in, Christ can save you. Even your deepest secret? Tell it to Jesus, and become free. Come unto Jesus, he will give you rest..."

While they spoke, all I thought of was Uncle Deji. If I spoke up, I would receive rest from him.

I didn't know who Jesus was, but I believed that if I told him this secret, I wasn't going to die.

A lot of students were walking towards the podium and kneeling, now.

I wondered if the numerous students that came out for the altar call, were also homosexuals. I stared at some, as they engaged in deep sobs.

I felt so sad for them. I closed my eyes, but somehow, I could still feel tears escape, and flow down my cheeks. I didn't hold them back.

While I knelt, it felt like the ground gave way, and I fell deep down into cold water.

"...and amen!" Those were the last and only words I heard from the prayer. By the sound of those words, I felt new and strong.

I looked forward to the sound of the closing bell that day.

It was a new beginning for me, whether Uncle Deji liked it or not.

As for me dying, we only die once; I already did.