



THE SEXUAL FAST

By Lizzy Oyebola Yakubu



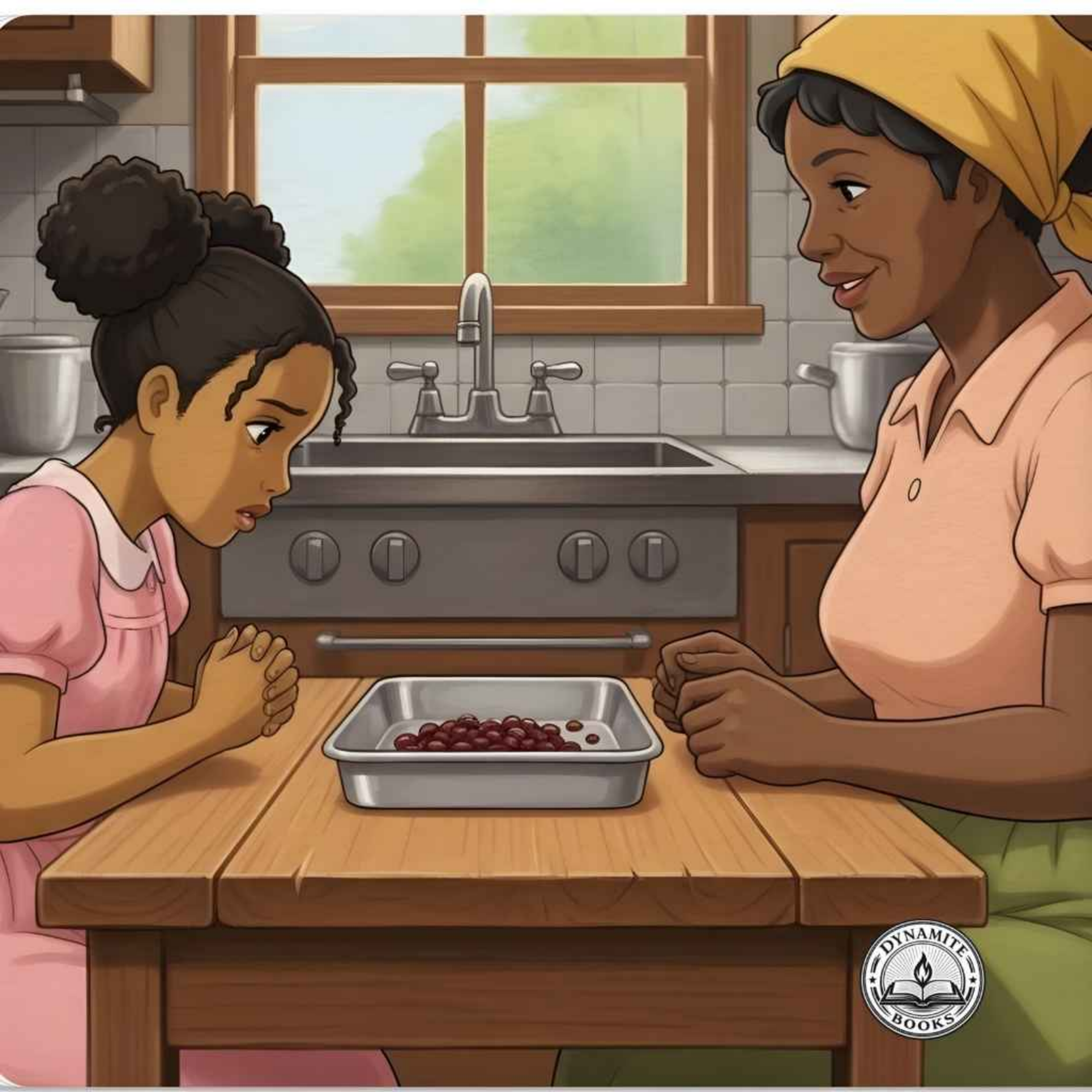
The afternoon sun leaned warmly against the kitchen window of their Lagos home. Oluchi sat at the wooden table, her fingers moving with a practiced rhythm as she sorted through a pile of brown beans, picking out the tiny stones. Mary stood at the entrance, shifting from one foot to the other. The air was quiet, except for the soft clink-clink of beans hitting the metal tray.





Mary's younger brother, David, zoomed past the kitchen door, clutching a soccer ball. "Mama, I'm going outside to play!" he shouted, his short natural hair bouncing with every step. Oluchi nodded with a smile, but Mary barely noticed him. Her mind was miles away, trapped in a whirlwind of thoughts that had been brewing since the school bell rang that morning.





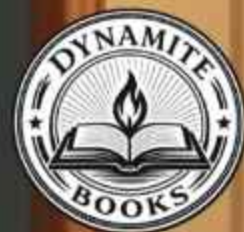
"Mama," Mary whispered, finally sitting across from her mother. "Something is happening to me. At school, there is this boy, Andrew. He told me today that I look beautiful in my natural hair. Mama, when he spoke, my heart started racing. I felt... like I just wanted to be near him all the time. Is something wrong with me?"





Oluchi reached out and placed her hand over Mary's. She didn't look shocked or angry; instead, her eyes were full of a deep, ancient wisdom. "Mary, my daughter, do you remember this morning? You started your three-day fast for the youth conference. Tell me, what happened when I started frying the plantains for David's breakfast?"





Mary blinked, surprised by the change in topic. "I remember, Mama. The smell of the fried dodo filled the whole house. It smelled so sweet. My stomach rumbled, and for a second, I really wanted to go into the kitchen and take just one slice. But then I remembered I was fasting, so I just took a deep breath and went back to my prayers."





Oluchi nodded. "Exactly. That 'sweet smell' is just like the attraction you feel for Andrew. It is natural to notice the aroma of a good thing. God made the dodo to smell good, just as He made the connection between a man and a woman to be beautiful. But Mary, noticing the smell is not the same as eating the meal. Because you are on a fast, you acknowledge the smell, but you keep your commitment."





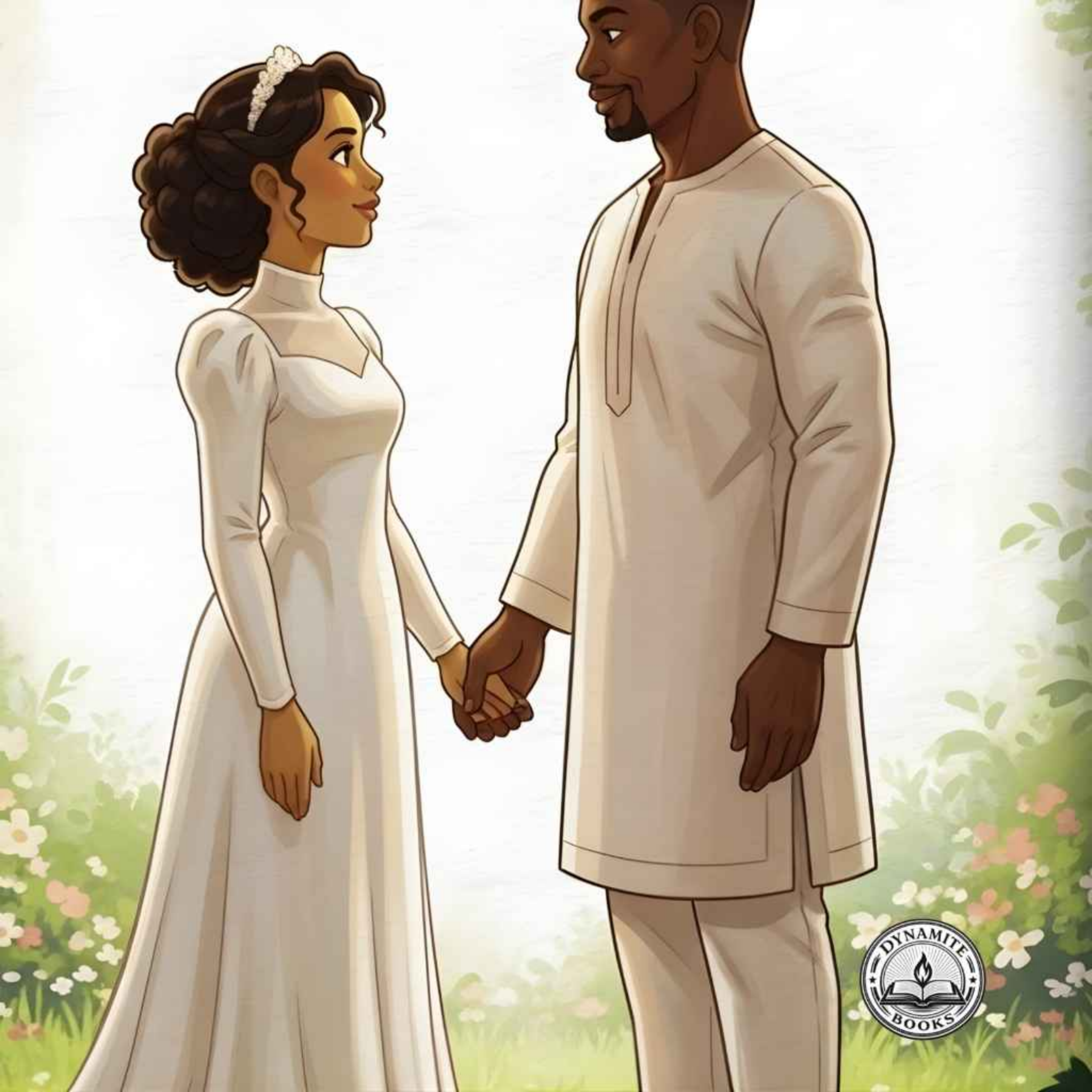
"You are in a season of a 'Sexual Fast,'" Oluchi explained softly. "Your body is waking up, and it is noticing the 'aromas' of life. This isn't a sin; it's a sign that you are growing. But acting on those feelings now is like breaking your fast too early. The Holy Spirit is your helper, giving you the strength to appreciate the beauty of the attraction without needing to touch it yet."





Mary took a long, slow breath, much like she had done that morning in the hallway. The heavy weight in her chest began to lift. She realized that she wasn't a "bad Christian" for finding Andrew attractive. She was simply a girl in training, learning to master her desires instead of being mastered by them. Her purity wasn't a burden; it was a fast she was offering to God.





She closed her eyes and imagined a day far in the future. She saw herself older, glowing in a modest white gown, standing beside a man named Ifeanyi who loved God with all his heart. In that vision, the "fast" was over, and the "feast" was beginning. The joy she felt in that thought was much greater than the fleeting thrill of a boy's compliment in a school hallway.





Mary turned back to her mother and picked up a handful of beans to help. "Thank you, Mama. I understand now. I'm going to stay on my fast. If the aroma gets too strong, I'll just talk to the Holy Spirit about it." Oluchi laughed softly and kissed Mary's forehead. Together, they sat in the golden light, two women of strength, finishing the work of the day.

The End



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