

HUNGRY FOR *God*

A JOURNEY OF FAITH, THE PATH TO
FULFILLING DREAMS, AND THE MUDDLED MIDDLE.

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FROM DEATH TO LIFE

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

(Philippians 1:6)

September 1998: At My Uncle's House

I remember the day I dedicated my life to God for the first time. It was not in a church or during an evangelical crusade; there was no sermon or promises of hell and heaven. It was a cry of desperation from within, a cry to know who I was and why I was born.

That day, I had locked the bedroom door at my uncle's house, and closed the curtains attempting to shut the world and its disappointments out. A cock crowed and the roof rattled from the midday summer heat. A half-burned candle and matchbox on a bedside table seemed to call my name, "Hannah."

A voice in my head answered, "Yes, one matchstick is enough to set the house on fire." But this was my uncle's house, not mine, and I wasn't sure if I really wanted to die anymore, as I had thought an hour earlier. With my eyes closed, I recalled myself deliberately ignoring a red traffic light. I had crossed Smith Street, the busiest in Dustburg, and made it safe to the other side, trembling; I nearly wet myself. The scene replayed in my mind like a scratched CD. *What if I were hit but did not die—became crippled for life, or confused motorists and endangered innocent people's lives?* The only person I had thought of was me. How selfish. I deserved a beating. Thankfully, no one was hurt and I was still alive, but for what?

Bottled emotions boiled within me, and my body trembled; my chest tightened like a pressure cooker, threatening to explode. With trembling hands I scratched the matchstick against its box. Three times it didn't crack fire; the fourth one finally lit the candle. The little flame danced from my breath and warmed my nose tip. Its smell triggered memories. *I miss home.*

I'd never lit a candle in prayer before. In search of the God of whom I felt desperately in need, I imitated what I often saw on movies. Tears streamed. I went on my knees and raised bleary eyes to the corrugated iron roof. "God, if you're real, help me. Why am I here? I don't feel like I want to live if I have no purpose. I've tried to be a good girl—it has got me nowhere. I've tried doing what my cousins Zinnia and Tina do. It doesn't feel right. Maybe I'm a coward. My life's empty, and I feel like this world has nothing to offer me but pain." Tears flowed as I shut my eyes, to wait for an answer. From the top of my head down to my bended knees, a wave-like warmth enveloped me. *Did my hair catch fire?* I opened my eyes: no. The atmosphere was different. Everything looked the same from the outside, but I felt different from within. Calmness. He came close, I didn't see Him, but I learned later in life that He was there.

My childhood memories fade with time, but a picture of this girl on her knees with a candle is still alive, like an oil canvas on a wall in my brain. Long before I knew I was on a faith journey, it had already begun. Was it life's disappointments that developed my quest to search for God? Could be. My parents didn't attend church and I have never witnessed them pray. Over the years, I've had more experiences like this one, sometimes vivid dreams that never left my head and heart.