



# WHISPERING HOPE

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# **WHISPERING HOPE**

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## **APPRECIATION**

First and foremost, my greatest appreciation goes to THE ALMIGHTY GOD, MY LORD and MY GOD, the one who has deemed it fit to count me worthy to be a vessel in HIS HOLY hands and to fulfill purpose. May HIS name alone be exalted forever more.

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And finally, to all my wonderful readers, thank you so much for reading my works. Thank you for the motivation all the way. If you wouldn't read, my writing would have been in vain. Thank you so much. May God bless you and yours. Amen.

I love you all.

## **DEDICATION**

This novel is dedicated to MY MOTHER and to every prayerful woman in the world. May you conquer as you fight on your knees.

## CHAPTER 1

Caroline Thomas towed her face and body swiftly. She picked up her body lotion and applied it gently on her skin, then walked to her wardrobe to make a choice of the nightie she would be wearing for the evening. She picked one, a plainly transparent silky black lingerie and slipped into it. She walked to the mirror and observed her seductive body.

“He can’t escape this tonight. I will give it all it takes to put him in the mood” She smiled...

The doorbell rang. She was very sure it was her husband. She walked briskly to the living room and called out,

“Who is it”?

"It's me!" Victor replied from outside.

Caroline opened the door and Victor walked in. A small briefcase was in his hand. He was wearing a moody face. Caroline tried to brighten his countenance.

“Welcome darling. What happened to my baby? Why the long face?”

Victor walked past her and sat on a chair in the living room without even looking at her.

“What happened sweet heart?” Caroline pressed further. “Why this mood tonight?” You didn’t even care to take a look at me.”

“I am sorry honey. I am so exhausted and worried at the same time. How was your day?”

“It was fine... What is the issue? Why are you worried?” She asked as she sat beside him on the chair.

“We have just being transferred.” Victor replied.

“Transferred? Transferred? What do you mean by that?” Caroline responded with a blank face.

“Haba Caroline! What part of being transferred is it that you

do not understand? We have been transferred to another congregation, in another town. The branch of the church at..."

"Hey!" Caroline interrupted him. "You and who? See, I have told you already that this pastoring of a thing is your own idea. You chose this life, not me. I didn't marry a pastor and I never bargained for this entire pastor's wife of a thing, so what is my business with some transfer?"

Victor bowed his head in total dismay.

"Caroline, when will you stop being a thorn in my flesh? Why do you choose to be a stumbling block to the work of God? When will you stop this attitude?"

"I will stop when you put an end to this whole drama Victor. When you put an end to this night mare and you go back to being the original man I got married to, not some confused clergy you suddenly became overnight."

Victor raised his head sharply.



“What?! Do you realize you are sinning against God? Why are you so adamant? Fine, I did not plan to be a pastor but when God later called me in to this ministry, do you expect me to refuse his call, just because I have a wife?”

“Victor, don’t bring all that please. God called you doesn’t mean that you should totally neglect your conjugal duties as a husband in this house. The God we serve is not an author of confusion, he cannot call you to serve him in order to destroy your home. Tell me dear husband, when last did we have sex in this house? Only God knows!” She replied pacing the living room aggressively.

“I don’t have the time to exchange words with you tonight. I am serving God and that is final!” Victor answered.

“Do you listen to yourself? You are serving God, so who is serving Satan? Just look at me, as young and energetic as I am, you want to turn me to an old machine? Each time you come back home, you are either tired or you are not in the mood. Other days, you are fasting and all sort of excuses...

Are you the first person to be a pastor?"

Victor didn't respond. He picked up his briefcase and walked to the restroom in the Master's bedroom to have a shower.

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Vivian just woke up. It's 3:00am. She looked at her husband Alex, snoring heavily beside her. She yawned and tapped him.

"Wake up sweet heart."

Alex stirred, turned to the other side and continued sleeping.

"Alex wake up!" Vivian repeated. She rose from the bed and went to the bathroom. She returned in a jiffy, Alex was still sleeping. She slapped his back this time around.

"Sweet heart, come on!"

Alex opened his eyes finally and sat up lazily

“Come on, let's make love.” Vivian said and started to massage his back in order to arouse him.

“It is okay.... Let us pray first.” Alex replied.

“Pray? Pray about what again?” Vivian asked.

“Prayer is never too much. At least, this is our first time after we wedded, let us put God first”.

"Really? But we prayed last night before going to bed. Let's do it on time joor. Why are you so spiritual about it?" Vivian asked.

“Prayer is never too much. Let us pray.”

He knelt beside the bed and started the prayers. Vivian was so reluctant at first to join him but she yielded later. After praying for about fifteen minutes, Vivian stood up and cut him short.

“Alex, it is okay. Is it not supposed to be a short prayer? I

mean, we prayed before we went to bed, so what is the meaning of all these drama?"

Alex opened his eyes and replied.

"Excuse me Vivian, did you just call prayer a drama? I can't believe that this is coming from you. Were you not the prayer warrior leader in your church before I married you? Are you sure you are even born again?!"

"Heeey!!! Please, don't give me all that. Haha?! What has been born again gotten to do with having fun with someone's husband? There is a time for everything. Three days into our marriage, no sex yet, and you are here telling me stories... Fine, we were both tired on the first night and you advised we postpone till the following morning. You woke up that morning complaining about a serious headache and I decided to let you rest. In the evening too, after we came back from the trip, you still complained of tiredness, I didn't disturb you, now you are talking about prayer. Where is that done? Please undress and let us do this thing once and for all jare."

"Can you listen to yourself Vivian? Why are you so carnal? Are we not supposed to be with each other till death do us part? Why are you in so much haste to have sex? Hunh? How can you be this aggressive about sex, just on the third day of our marriage?"

"Really? Are you for real?" Vivian asked. "Hehehe! Someone should please come to my aid... Like seriously? So, what exactly are you driving at now? What are you trying to say?"

"In short, you are annoying me... And to think that I married a Christian sister!" Alex exclaimed.

"Of course you did dear husband! See honey, I struggled a lot to keep myself pure during courtship... I mean, we had a lot of temptations when we were courting but we overcame them all... Now, it is time for us to enjoy each other, what is stopping us? I am so eager to have it. I thought you should look forward to it too, what sort of a man are you? Waking up next to your wife for two days without touching her?"

Vivian asked. She started rubbing his chest in hope that he might give in.

“What kind of problem is this? That's why i wanted to marry a virgin oh! A virgin will not give me problems like this.”

"Virgin? Are you a virgin yourself? We both were not virgins before we met Jesus, so why the self-righteousness? Alex, come on, are you pulling my legs? Let's do it."

"Na wa oh! Must we do it now? I have my reasons for delaying it. We need to be sensitive." Alex put in.

“Sensitive? About what? I abstained from sex all these years in other for me to enjoy it with my legal husband. Tell me, what reason is strong enough to deny us our pleasure? Are you impotent?”

Alex hissed and said,

“I can see that you don't understand at all. See, you can't force me okay? I'll just sleep right away.”

He laid on the bed turning his back to her. Vivian felt confused. After some seconds, she grabbed him and started to pull at his boxers forcefully.

"It must be tonight!" She said.

"No!" Alex retorted.

"Yes!" Vivian continued to pull at him while Alex struggled with her...

## CHAPTER 2

Victor walked out of the bathroom into the bedroom. Caroline was already lying on the bed. He stripped into his night wear and joined her. He sat with his back to the bunk and said,

“I know you aren’t sleeping yet. Won’t you at least ask me where we were posted?”

Caroline sighed and answered.

“Darling, if you still want to continue talking about ministry here on this bed, count me out.”

She sat up and continued,

“Victor Thomas, you know how necessary food is to the body, but it is a pity that you are not feeding this marriage with the kind of food that is essential to make it grow... I have missed you Victor, can’t you see? We no longer talk about us again. It is either you talk about church, ministry, prayers, vigil and all that... You have practically replaced



your wife with the ministerial assignment, our marriage is suffering... We are no longer as intimate as before... When last did you take me out Victor? You keep attending meetings upon meetings, you barely have time for me... Look at me, see my hair, it has been long I visited the salon, yet you don't even care to know why... This is so unlike the man I married... You forsake your conjugal duties to me and come up with different stories everyday...It is either you are tired or you are fasting. Why Victor? I am tired of this man I am seeing. I want the man I got married to. We now have sex only twice, or at times even once in a month! Why?" She cried.

Victor shifted uneasily. He reached out to his wife and held her hands.

"I am sorry dear. Everything will take shape very soon... You know, I am new in the ministerial work, if I have failed in some areas, please forgive me, I will make amends.

"This is what you keep saying all the time... When will you make amends? Can't you just do so right now? Is this the

same way other pastors like you treat their wives too? Do they abandon them like this?”

“There you go again Caroline. I just told you to be patient, the next thing you do is to compare my home with that of other pastors. My dear, you are the one that needs to understand 'us'! We are in this work of the ministry together. The earlier you understand and accept this fact, the better for both of us... Other pastor's wives you see out there cooperate with their husbands, that is why you see the ministry succeeding... You need to stop seeing it as “my ministry,” it is our ministry, be patient with me, things will get better...”

"But I have run out of patience Victor!" She interrupted him.

“Okay then, there is nothing else I can do.” Victor replied angrily and walked out of the bedroom. Caroline burst into tears.

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The following morning, pastor Victor was seated at the

dining table, having breakfast... The doorbell rang.

“Just a minute please!” He replied and walked to the door. He opened it and saw Andrew, a member of his church.

“Wow! Brother Andrew, you are welcome.”

“Good morning pastor, how was your night sir?”

“Very fine Bro. We bless God and yours?”

“Fine thanks sir. How is mummy?”

They entered the living room and settled on the chair.

“She is doing fine.” Pastor Victor replied and called out.

“Honey, Bro Andrew is saying hello!”

“Just a minute please!” Caroline answered from the bedroom.

“Welcome bro, but you didn’t say you will be coming this early. I hope all is really well? Pastor Victor asked.

“Sincerely sir, all is not really well...” Andrew started... He was interrupted by Caroline.

“See who we have here! Bro Andrew, it’s good to see you!” She greeted.

“Same here mama! Good morning ma... you look as gorgeous as ever. My pastor is really taking good care of you.”

“You can say that again my brother! Thanks, you look good too... How is sister Rose?”

“She is fine ma.”

“Good... What do we offer you? Juice? Tea?”

“Oh! I am very okay for now ma. Thanks so much?”

“Alright then. I will be in the kitchen. I need to tidy up.”

“It is all right ma.”

Caroline exited the living room and Pastor Victor turned to Andrew.

“So Bro Andrew, I am listening”.

"Yes sir. The issue is, I am really tired of Rosemary. I am afraid, can she really be submissive when we get married? I hope she has not been pretending all these while?"

“Spill it out bro. What really happened?” Pastor Victor inquired.

“Okay, She got a job at a five star hotel, as a receptionist precisely. But, I don’t want my fiancée to work in a hotel. Of all jobs... No, I can’t allow her. She insisted that she had to take the job, that she needs money for the wedding planning and preparation and I have told her no way! To my surprise, She still went ahead to take the offer. She will be

resuming next week Monday... Pastor, I don't think I will marry her, she is too stubborn."

"Is that all?" Pastor Victor asked.

"That is all sir." Andrew replied.

"Okay.... You see, my brother you need to take things easy okay? Not everyone who works in a hotel is wayward. The job of a receptionist itself, personally I do not see anything wrong with it... Your fiancée is a Christian, so why don't you trust her? If she will be happy on the job, allow her to do it."

"Pastor, I don't feel comfortable with her working in such an environment. She will be exposed to diverse temptations that will not be helpful to her spiritual life, not that I don't want her to be happy. Try to understand me sir."

"It is alright. I will call her to come over. I will engage her in some discussions. You see, the Bible says "Can two walk together except they agree?" If both of you will marry each other, you must be on a common ground. One of you have

to make sacrifices for the other person... I will talk to her. If it is because of the money she needs, it is not bad for her to take the job, you just need to understand. Temptation can come to anyone anywhere, whether you work in a hotel or not... But be that as it may, I will talk to her, if she is willing to let go of the offer for peace to reign, fine.”

“Okay, thank you sir. I am really grateful.

“Let's thank God bro.”

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Alex was about to leave the house. Vivian walked up to him.

“And where do you think you are going dear husband? We have an unfinished business last night, we need to sort it out, you are going nowhere! You locked yourself in the visitor’s room, just so we wouldn’t have sex. What the hell is wrong with you Alex? You refuse to make love to me. It's been three days we got married. Today is the fourth day...You are going nowhere today. Read my lips,

nooo-where!”

“But wait Vivian, did we get married only to have sex? Is that all there is to do in marriage? What if I traveled for a long time? What would you do?”

“Hey husband, don’t compare two things that do not look alike. If you are not here, I would know that you aren't here but if you are here, then you must be here really!” She hissed and blocked the entrance with her body.

“Okay...Now, answer my first question, is sex the only reason why we got married?”

“Thank God you know it is one of the reasons.” She hissed again.

“You know what? Just leave my way peacefully. I don’t want trouble. I need to meet the man that did our wedding video coverage to sort out some things with him. We will iron out this issue when I am back.”



“Back from where? You’re going nowhere! You keep postponing this issue like it is one big deal of a thing. No one is going out of this house today, till we have enjoyed ourselves to the fullest. You own your business; I am on leave, so no one can mandate anyone of us to appear anywhere.”

“Vivian, don’t be a trouble maker, get out of my way.”

“No Alex, you are going nowhere. And I mean every bit of it.”

Her cell phone which she held in her hand rang. She picked it,

"Hello! Yes? Wow! Rita is that you? Are you back? Oh! Thanks girlfriend! She released her grip on the door and got carried away with the conversation she was having with her friend... Alex quickly seized the opportunity to escape from her. He opened the door quickly and stepped out.

“Come back here Alex!” Vivian shouted after him. She

spoke through the phone,

“You know what girlfriend? I will call you back... This is your number right? Okay... Bye.”

She jumped out and followed Alex to the compound.

“Alex! I said come back here!”

Alex didn't answer her. He opened the gate swiftly and got out of the compound. Vivian sighed and said to herself “You better come up with a good explanation for this action of yours when you are back. You will meet me here” She snapped her fingers, and walked back into the house.

### CHAPTER 3

After Andrew had gone, Caroline walked to the living room and waited for Victor who had left the house with Andrew in order to see him off. She placed her hands on her hips, ready to confront her husband...

Just as Victor walked in through the door, she bellowed,

“So you can really counsel intending couple right? Hehehehe!” She clapped her hands together... “I could overhear you telling the brother to allow the sister pick a job of her choice. So, why can’t you apply that same counsel to yourself and allow me to live my life too instead of forcing me to join you in the ministry?”

“It’s okay Caroline, don’t provoke me this early morning. It’s too early to argue please.”

“Early right? It’s okay, I am going out in search of a job today. I am not arguing with you any further.”

“Caroline, how does brother Andrew and his fiancée’s case

resemble ours? Tell me, is he a pastor like me? Look Caroline, you can't get into any paid employment now, knowing fully well that we don't get to stay in a location for too long before being transferred. Why can't you just be supportive for once?"

"And why can't you be selfless for once too? Did I go to school to become a pastor's wife? I am a chartered accountant for Christ sake! Allow me to practise my profession!"

"So, did I also go to school to become a pastor? Have you forgotten that I used to be a Civil Engineer before the calling? I sacrificed all for the sake of Christ!"

"Yes you should do that because you were the one that God called and it was your choice to yield to his call. You weren't under duress to do it. No one forced you, so don't force me. Let me be myself and be fulfilled."

"God called us both Caroline because we have become one, and the earlier you come to terms with this fact, the

better for you.”

"God called you, not me. How can I be called into ministry and I wouldn't know? I need a job! I want to practise my profession. Period!"

“Must you? Caroline, I gave you an idea about a business we can....”

"I am not doing any business!" Caroline interrupted him.

"It's alright then. Suit yourself!"

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After Alex left home, Vivian got dressed and went to visit her friend Stella at her salon in town.

“Wow! See who we have here. The latest bride in town!” Stella hugged her cheerfully.

“How are you sis? Good to see you!” Vivian replied

"I am fine dear. How you too?"

"I am good."

"Haha! You didn't even tell me you would be coming... Nice to have you anyway... look at you! You are glowing already. You have started enjoying that thing very well." Stella teased.

"What thing? Naughty girl... I came to get some groceries so I decided to seize the opportunity also to check on you... Then, these artificial nails don't tire me. You know I am not really comfortable with fixing nails. I only did it because of the wedding... Abeg, help me get rid of them."

"No problem girl, at your service. Come and have your seat." Stella replied and added, "How is Alex?"

"He is doing fine thanks." Vivian replied.

"And how is the honeymoon? Won't you gist your friend?"

Stella asked smiling mischievously. "Oya gist me now, how far? You don't dey enjoy the thing?" Stella pressed Vivian further.

Vivian frowned her face and ignored her question. Stella observed her closely and asked, "Come on girl, what's wrong? I know something is wrong. Why not share it? A problem shared is have solved."

"Nothing really, maybe it's just the stress of trying to adjust to marital life."

"Haba! What stress is tied to your married life yet? I mean you are still on your honeymoon. It's not like you have started going to work and there are no kids yet, so what stress?"

"You won't understand." Vivian replied smiling.

"Really? Okay oh, Mrs. Married woman. We are not on the same page yet. But you know my wedding is in three months' time, I guess I will understand better after I get

married too.”

“Maybe” Vivian replied absent mindedly.

“Or is it the bedroom activities of oga that is weighing you down like this? Oh! I see! You don’t sleep well in the night. Alex should take it easy on my friend oh!”

Vivian laughed.

“Hahahaha! Stella, you like amebo... Why are you this inquisitive? Well, how I wish?”

Stella look surprised and asked, “You said what”?

“Nothing” Vivian quickly added, shifting her gaze to the nails that Stella was working on.

“What do you mean by 'how I wish?' Stella asked. Don’t tell me that Alex is not good in bed. They say tall guys are the baddest. And a Christian brother like Alex, he should still be very agile because he didn’t waste himself on girls before



marriage.”

“Henhen... okay oh, if you say so.” Vivian replied.

“Tell me how has it been? Or are you sexually active than he is?” Stella pursued.

Vivian frowned her face and continually gazed at her finger nails. “I don’t know” she replied.

“What do you mean you don’t know?”

“Because we haven’t even had sex yet!” Vivian blurted out.

“What? Why? Wait, Vivian! You mean Alex hasn’t touched you yet?”

“No, he hasn’t.” Vivian replied feeling uneasy.

“Abeg, wetin happen nah? Are you guys fasting on your honeymoon or what kind of thing is this?”

“Sincerely, I don’t know why Alex is doing this but I believe it is for the good of both of us. He said he has his reason for delaying, spiritual reason I guess but I am not comfortable with the whole thing at all, I mean, I really want to have sex!”

“Spiritual reasons? And you didn’t deserve to be aware of the whole thing before now? You have a right at least to be informed before now, I mean, who does that?”

“Abi oh! See my life oh Stella. I’m even scared”

“Hmmmmm....it is well. Don’t be scared, if not that I knew him before, I would have been scared too but Alex is a good man, a child of God to the core, just that the whole thing is strange... Or is he embarking on a personal fasting exercise?”

“At all my dear. He eats every day. He just keeps saying it is not yet time whenever I bring up the issue”

“He is not fasting... Haha? So what is the point? It is only a man that is fasting that wouldn’t want to touch his wife...”

Wait, are you sure you didn't offend him? Maybe he is getting back at you, some men do it"

Vivian thought for a while and responded,  
"Offend? No... I don't think so. We did not have any serious misunderstanding before the wedding."

"Wow! This is strange! Could it be that he is impotent? I'm sorry to ask."

"No Stella... He has done it before... Alex used to have numerous girlfriends before he became born again. He's not impotent. At all."

"Really? This is strange then... So, what do you want to do now?"

"I don't even know. I feel there is something he is not telling me..."

Stella nodded her head slowly and said "HmMMM it's possible oh!"

“But what I don’t understand is why he refused to tell me before now. Why did he even marry me when he knew very well that he is not ready for it yet? I kept a holy courtship all these while, only for me to get married and still be denied sex. This is crazy!”

“Really crazy my dear... Well, just take it easy. Take your mind off it and give him more time okay?”

“Alright. Thanks dear. But I will make sure I force something out of his mouth tonight.”

“It is well... Just take it easy.... God will intervene.” Stella advised her.

Vivian bade her farewell and went back home.

## CHAPTER 4

Caroline stood in the middle of the living room, agitated...

She was on a call with her big sister...

“You know what sis? That man is really driving me crazy... I don’t seem to understand him anymore.”

The voice at the other end replied,

“Cool down dear, you have to take things easy okay? You know, as it is now, you are a Mother in Israel to the ladies in your church, most of them might see you as their role model, so be careful of.....”

Caroline interrupted her.

“That is where the problem lies... I don’t even want to see myself as a Mother in Israel, Mother in Zion or whatever. I just want to be happily married to the man I fell in love with... I never bargained to be a pastor’s wife, so they should look elsewhere for their role model... All these things are driving me crazy!”

“Caroline, marriage is about sacrifice... Since it is your husband's idea, vision, dream or whatever, then support him. You two have become one. He needs support from you, most especially...”

Caroline interrupted her again.

“But why isn't he supporting me too, if that be the case... If he wants me to support him, he should support me too!”

How? I don't seem to get you.” Her sister replied.

“I mean Victor doesn't want me to work and I really want to. I don't like staying at home all the time, doing next to nothing. He said because of the nature of the ministerial work, he gets to be transferred often, so I shouldn't apply for any paid job... You see what I'm saying? He is active, doing his own pastoring, fulfilling his vision, while I waste away!”

“Oh.... I understand you now... Honestly sis, I am so short of words.”

"Oh-Ooooooh! You see what I'm passing through?"

"Hmmm, all the same, my dear. if you begin to see that ministry like yours, you will begin to see where you will fit in and before you know it you both will get busy for God."

"See big sis, I want to pursue my career... Most times, I really wished I had gotten a job before we got married, at least he wouldn't have the guts to tell me to go and resign..."

"I understand your point... This is serious... If he doesn't want you to work, how will you be able to assist him financially?"

"Abi... He said he will support me if I decide to run a shop, maybe daily need items or food stuff so that I can generate some income... But you know I am not into all that... Doing business is not just my thing."

"Hmmm... My dear, it is well... I am really short of words. I

just pray God will help you both to reach a common ground. Please be patient.”

“Seriously! I will go out in search of a job I need to do something... The man I married has disappeared.... It’s like I am dealing with a total stranger now... I don’t seem to understand him anymore... Thanks for your time sis. I will call you later.”

“You are welcome dear. I pray God guide you... Take care of yourself... I will also call you some other time... My love to Victor.” Her sister replied and hung up.

Caroline bathed and got dressed. She picked up her handbag and left the house. She headed for her husband’s church office... She soon got there and knocked on the door.

“Yes come in!” Pastor Victor replied. Caroline entered.

“Jesus! What is this?” Victor nearly screamed.



Caroline was a bit scared. She checked out herself wondering what was wrong.

“What is what? Did you see a ghost?” Caroline asked.

“Why are you even here in the first place? Are you tired of the job search you said you would be going for?”

“No, I decided to check on you at the office first, collect the cash I need to make my hair and go straight to the salon for today. The money on me wouldn’t be enough.”

“Dressed like this? Tight fitting trousers and a body hug. A pastor’s wife!”

“Like how? What is wrong with my dressing? Since when have I been dressing like this? I remember you used to love these type of outfits oh! You know what, I don’t even care about what you are talking about, I need to sit and relax a bit before I go. I am kind of tired.”

“Sit where?” Victor asked.

“Here of course! Or I can’t sit in my husband’s office again?”

“Caroline you are not even ashamed of yourself. A whole pastor’s wife, dressed like this... Please, you can’t sit here, kindly take your leave. I can’t afford to allow people to meet you here dressed like this.”

“Enh-enh! I said it! I know you must have been having an affair, that is why you refused to touch me for a very long time... You are trying to chase me away so that your girlfriend won’t meet me here right? What is wrong with the dress I’m wearing? You are only finding excuses. I’m going nowhere hubby. This same kind of outfit is the type you used to admire and even buy for me.” She hissed.

She settled on the couch, crossed her legs and adjusted her top.

“What kind of a woman is this?” Victor exclaimed.

“And what kind of a husband are you too?” Caroline

responded.

“Besides, I thought I left two thousand naira with you when I was leaving home yesterday morning. How come you don’t have enough cash with you again?”

“I spent part of it already and you know the kind of hairstyles I make too, they are sophisticated ones, did you just marry me today? Victor, don’t complain to me about money at all. You were the one that dropped your well paid job to become a full-time pastor... I asked you to allow me to work, you said no. So, please give me money. I can’t shout!”

“My God! This woman! I pray for patience... More patience...”

“Whatever!” Caroline replied.

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Vivian was watching a TV programme... There was a knock on the door. She checked the time, it was half past seven.

"Yes? Who's there?" She inquired from where she was seated.

"It's me." Alex responded from outside.

"You who? Who is 'it is me?' You don't have a name?"

"Will you stop the game sweetheart and open this door?"  
Alex replied.

"Well, I know it is you dear husband, but you have a price to pay for running away from me in the morning. You made a fool out of me."

"Just open first I will explain everything to you." Alex pleaded.

Vivian walked to the door and spoke to Alex from the window,

"Do you think I am a fool Alex? I am not opening this door

for you tonight. You left home since morning to God knows where, just to avoid me. Now, you come home, asking me to open the door. You didn't even bother calling me all through the day... You will spend the night there Alex."

"What?!! Vivian, spend the night outside, in a house. I paid for? This is ridiculous!"

"Well sweetheart, you do not need to remind me that you were the one that paid for this house, that is none of my business, since we were joined together in matrimony, whatever you have is mine, this is my house and you are not entering tonight. In short, there will be no peace in this house until you stop this drama you are playing." She hissed and walked back to the chair she was sitting on. She settled on it and continued watching T.V.

Alex shouted from outside,

"Vivian, open this door now before I unleash the beast in me."

Vivian laughed and replied,

"I wish I can see the beast in you right on our bed."

She laughed again and continued watching TV... Alex knocked louder and harder this time.

"Vivian open this door now!"

"Alex go away, you are disturbing our neighbors. You wouldn't want to let them know the reason why you were locked out tonight would you?"

"Now, before I count to three, you must open this door for me. One!...."

## CHAPTER 5

Caroline stood before the mirror in her matrimonial bedroom, wiping her face with a cotton wool and at the same time dancing to a hip-hop music she was listening to from her phone. Her husband entered the bedroom, went straight to the phone and switched off the music. Caroline frowned at him through the mirror.

“Yes, what is it again? I didn’t cross your path tonight oh, I am on my own lane, so how may I help you?” She asked.

“Which lane are you? Caroline aren’t you ashamed of yourself? See the kind of music you are listening to, a pastor's wife for that matter. What if any of our members come around unannounced?”

Caroline interrupted him vehemently.

“Excuse me!” She barked, with real anger in her eyes.

“I am still talking!” Victor shot back.

“And I said excuse me!” Caroline insisted and continued.

“Victor Thomas! Let this be last time you would ever talk about church member, ministry or whatever in this house especially whenever I am having fun or else...?”

“Or else what? Caroline... Or else what?”

Caroline stood up quickly and walked to where Victor stood, her chest almost touching his and replied him,

“Or you will have to face the lioness in this woman standing before you!” She hissed and walked out of the bedroom angrily.

Victor stood confused.

“I married the devil herself.” He murmured.

“Come back here Caroline!” He shouted and followed after her.

“What is the meaning of what you just did? You walked out on me?” He said as soon as he entered the living room



where Caroline sat, shaking her foot vigorously.

“Yes I did! See, Victor I want to be on my own in this house, can't I live my life? Anything I do, you start talking about church member, ministry... What is it? You have relegated me so much to the background in this marriage, you don't care about my feelings or preferences anymore. Your church members come first almost in everything. You consider them and their feelings first in nearly all we do in this house. The ministry is nearly destroying my home right now!”

She stood and faced her husband, tears running down her cheeks.

“When last did we go out together to have a nice time? You even didn't notice that my hair was unkempt for a long time, very much unlike you. You have no time for me anymore. It is one church programme after another, meetings upon meetings. You fast almost everyday and use that as an excuse not to touch me. If you are no more interested in this marriage, then let me know!”

Victor went sober. He replied,

“No, Caroline dear, it’s not what you think at all, I still love you very much. This ministerial work is so demanding, try to understand me too.”

“Understand what Victor?” She screamed in tears. “Are you the only pastor? Does ministry destroy relationships between wife and husband? The man I got married to is no more here. That romantic, sweet and energetic husband of mine.... He is hidden inside you, somewhere... I want him back. You are a total stranger now and it is really driving me crazy.”

Victor held her hands.

"It’s okay my dear. I will make a change, just give me some time.”

“That is what you say all the time. Give me some time... Things can’t continue like this!” She replied and walked

back to the bedroom.

“How I wish this woman understands this ministry and stop being a thorn in my flesh. God please change her.” He prayed.

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Alex appealed to his wife again from the verandah where he had stood since she refused to open the door for him.

“Vivian it’s 10pm already and it’s really cold out here. Will you open now? Okay, I’m sorry for what I did in the morning. I will explain better when you let me in.”

“Are you sure you are ready to sleep in this house tonight?” Vivian asked.

“What do you mean? Why won’t I want to sleep in my own house? Do I have any other option? Vivian, it’s too early for neighbors to be hearing our arguments and fights.”

Vivian moved to the entrance again and replied,

“You will be allowed in when you agree that we will consummate our marriage tonight. You know what I mean?”

“Okay. I understand. No problem about that, just open the door for me please.”

“You promise?” Vivian asked.

“Yea.” Alex responded.

She opened the door for him. Alex entered with a deep frown on his face and gave Vivian a resounding slap on her face. She screamed in horror.

“In my own house Vivian! You locked me outside in the cold for over 2 two hours, are you the husband here? You must be very silly to do that.” He fumed with anger.

Vivian held her face, still in shock, she looked at her husband as if she didn't believe what just happened.

“Alex, you slapped me?”

“Oh yes I did and I have no regrets for doing so. I need to reset your brain and remind you of the fact that I am your husband!”

He walked away and left her where she stood in shock. He got to the bedroom and undressed in order to have a warm shower. Vivian walked slowly into the room and said almost in a whisper,

“Alex, just four days into our marriage, you slapped your bride?”

“And just four days into our marriage, you locked your groom outside in the cold. What kind of a bride does that? It’s only a crazy bride!”

He continued to undress himself and then walked to the bathroom to have a hot shower. Vivian sat on the bed, picked her phone and dialed her pastor’s number. Alex

peeped out of the bathroom and noticed that she was trying to call someone.

“And who are you trying to call?”

“It’s none of your business.”

“Okay, we shall see who will applaud you after you might have told him or her that you locked your husband out for good two hours!”

Vivian removed the phone from her ear and replied him.

“And we shall see who will congratulate you for not having fun with your bride and afterwards slapped her just four days after the wedding.”

The pastor didn't pick her call. She dropped the phone angrily on the bed. She was really upset... Then her phone began to ring... Pastor had called her back when he missed her call. Alex came out of the bathroom with soap all over his body and moved closer to check who the caller was.

Vivian hid the phone from his sight.

“Who is that?” Alex asked.

“Why do you want to know?” Vivian growled.

He snatched the phone from her and walked out of the bedroom. Vivian followed him immediately.

“Come back here Alex, you have no right to seize my phone!” She screamed and bolted after him.

## CHAPTER 6

Alex got to the sitting room and picked the call.

“Hello sister Vivian! How are you doing?” Pastor greeted.

“Good evening sir, we are doing fine, it’s Alex sir.”

“Oh it’s you Bro Alex, how are you doing? How’s your wife?”

“We are doing great sir, she’s fine too... We just wanted to say hello but she is busy at the moment, that’s why I picked your call sir.” He lied.

Vivian tried to snatch the phone from him but he got hold of her hands.

“I am sorry Pastor, I need to attend to something here quickly sir.” Alex said.

“Okay bro, my regards to sis...”

Alex ended the call before the pastor could finish his



statement.

“How dare you pick my call without my permission?” Vivian charged at him.

“It’s too early for us to be exposing our misunderstandings to people. Have you quickly forgotten what they told us during counseling? We have to learn how to manage our issues and settle our differences amidst each other.” He replied with a frown and shifted his gaze to the TV.

“You should have thought about that before slapping me! Alex, are you like this or you are just acting? Tell me all that we passed through this short while in our marriage is just a dream... You slapped me few days into our marriage and you expect me to keep calm as if nothing happened? My God! She sobbed.

"It's okay sweetheart, I am so sorry... It wasn't intentional. You pushed me to it... You shouldn't have locked me outside because of what happened in the morning. It's very wrong. All the same, I am sorry okay? I promise that this will

never happen again.”

Vivian continued crying...

“Alex, our honeymoon is turning to a night mare... Why are we having problems, just four days after our wedding? Why have you refused to make love to me? Did I offend you? Or am I not attractive enough?”

“That is not the problem my dear. Whoever says you are not attractive must be a fool. You didn’t offend me either... I just need to settle some things in prayer and I want you to cooperate with me.”

“What are those things that I do not have a right to know? How do I cooperate with you when I don’t know what exactly to pray about? I mean what could be so strong to the extent of preventing you from having intercourse with your newly wedded wife? This is not making sense at all....Tell me what the problem is exactly Alex, I need to know, I have a right to know! Please!!!” She pleaded.

“I will tell you when it is time.” He replied.

He stood up, walked up to her and drew her into his arms.

“I am sorry for all that happened okay? I am deeply sorry dear. Forgive me will you?” He kissed her forehead while she continued sobbing...

“It’s alright.” She replied.

“That’s my girl. I love you so much.”

“But why didn’t you explain this to me before we got married?” She asked.

“There is a time for everything my dear. If I told you then, you might not understand... I didn't want you to leave me.”

Vivian shook her head and replied

“This is selfishness Alex... Okay, if you insist it's not yet time for me to know the details, then how long will I wait before

you touch me? When exactly are we going to consummate this marriage on our matrimonial bed?”

“It won’t be long my dear... let’s say three months highest, then we will be good till forever.” He smiled.

“What?!!! What did just say? Did you just say three months? Three good months! Alex has killed me! I am in a big trouble oh!”

“No trouble my dear. Trust me... Just trust me. You will understand very soon.”

Vivian continued to sob.

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Pastor Victor summoned Andrew and his fiancée, Rosemary to his office for a meeting. They both got there and took their seats.

“God bless you both for coming. The Lord will honour you.”

Pastor Victor began. He said a short prayer and continued,

“In order not to take too much of your time, I will go straight to the point... Sister Rosemary!”

“Yes Pastor?”

“Bro Andrew came to me to explain some things pertaining to you both and I want to hear your own side of the story... Now, don't pick an offence against him for coming to me, he is only trying to ensure that things work out between you... So, he told me about the job you just got in a hotel... He said he is not comfortable with it. What is your own take about it?”

Rosemary eyed Andrew and replied,

“Thanks so much sir... I really appreciate you... It is not a bad job pastor. It is the work of a receptionist not as a call girl or anything sir. Or is the work of a receptionist bad?”

“Not at all!” Pastor Victor replied promptly.

“Thank you sir but Andrew just doesn’t want me to take up the job. The issue is, he is just too jealous and possessive.”

“Me? Jealous?” Andrew asked.

“Yes you Andrew, you are too jealous!” Rosemary replied him.

“How?” Andrew asked.

“It’s okay Bro Andrew,” Pastor Victor came in. “Sis Rose, can you explain why you said that? I am listening.”

“Thank you pastor, Andrew has been like this since I met him... My dream profession has always been Banking. I loved to work in a bank... So, I decided to pursue the Banking career... I studied Banking/Finance and I graduated with a Second Class Upper... I was about to start my professional courses when I met him... He convinced me to change my mind about my dream career, claiming that...”

Andrew interrupted her by clearing his throat. He shifted uneasily in his chair and tapped Rose on her thigh to stop her from talking further.

“Leave me Andrew. I am ready to tell Pastor everything. You want to paint me a bad person, I will let pastor know how much you have done in my life!” She snapped at him.

Pastor Victor looked at Andrew, but he bowed his head to avoid his gaze.

Rosemary continued,

“As I was saying sir, Andrew said bankers are flirts... That it is not a good profession for a decent girl, and that most of them are prostitutes in disguise, that men run after them a lot, that it's not a good profession for a woman... Bla...bla...bla... So, because of the love I had for him and for peace to reign, I changed my mind...”

Andrew interrupted her again.

“You changed your mind because you wanted to, that was not my fault at all. I only gave an advice! I never forced you!”

“Oh really! Now it is I who wanted to change my mind? It is not your fault.” Rosemary replied and shook her head.

Pastor Victor turned to Andrew and said,

“Bro Andrew, I will appreciate it if you allow sister Rose to relate her own side of the story. I will listen to yours later, please don’t interrupt her again.”

“No problem Sir.” Andrew replied.

Rosemary wanted to continue her story but Andrew cut her short again.

“Enough Rose! Is it because I said I am not comfortable with you working at a hotel, that is why you want to start telling false stories?”



“Excuse me! Which of the stories is false? That I changed my mind about my dream profession because you insisted? Or that I am attending this church with you because you said if I don’t, you would walk out of this relationship? Or the fact that I used to wear trousers before I met you and you banned me from wearing it till date? Or that a bank even called me recently for an oral interview but you insisted I mustn't go just because you don't want your wife to work in a bank? Which of the stories is false? Enh? Tell me! I did all that for the sake of love, but now, my eyes are opened, I am not willing to live to please you anymore! I couldn't pursue my dream career all because of you... I got a job as a receptionist again, you still said No! What exactly is your stress?!” Rosemary blurted out.

“You know what? I think you have a lot of issues bothering your mind aside the ones I am aware of. Let us go somewhere to cool off, then we will come back to see pastor later...”

Pastor, please kindly permit us to take our leave.” Andrew replied.

“I am going nowhere with you Andrew. I am not crazy. I haven’t lost my mind. I know what I am saying... You know what? At this junction, I refuse to continue in this slavery you call a relationship, if this is how life will be with you in marriage, I will rather remain single for now.” She screamed at him.

"It’s okay sister Rosemary. Be calm, I understand you..... Do you still have anything to say apart from what you have said?" Pastor Victor put in.

Andrew cut in before Rosemary could reply.

“Never mind pastor, we will go and settle our differences, it is the devil at work.”

He gripped Rosemary's wrist and pulled her up from her seat. Pastor Victor sat back watching them.

“Let us go now!” Andrew ordered her.

“And what if I don’t?” Rosemary asked.

“Then consider the wedding cancelled!”

“Yes! Typical of you. I know that would be your response! So be it! No more wedding!” She replied calmly.

“You said what?” He asked.

“You heard me Drew... Do your worst! I don’t need to be afraid of your threats anymore. I am tired of them already... I will be glad to leave you and live to please myself for once... I need my freedom to do something meaningful in my life!” Rosemary replied confidently, raising her voice again.

Andrew turned to pastor Victor and said,

“Did you just see that pastor? I told you, she is so full of herself.”

“Oh Really? Then, what do you have to say about all the allegations she raised against you? Do you mean to tell me

that a lady of her age doesn't know what she is saying?"  
Pastor Victor asked.

"Pastor, they are only excuses. She wants to get out of the relationship. All she said are all lies..."

"What? Me? Lying? Oh! Thank God we aren't even married yet, you know what? This relationship is over. I am out of here. Pastor, please permit me to leave." She picked her bag and headed for the door.

"Sis Rose wait!" Pastor Victor called her back.

"I am so sorry pastor, I have to leave sir, I will personally find time to come and see you. Please sir. I'm upset..."

"Alright then, you can go." Pastor Victor replied.

She walked out without looking back at Andrew who was still shocked about her reaction. Pastor Victor faced Andrew and said,

“Now, it’s man to man... Do you really deny all that your fiancée just accused you of? Is it really true or she is indeed lying?”

## CHAPTER 7

“Yes? Bro Andrew, I am awaiting your response. All that Sister Rosemary said, are they true?” Pastor Victor asked again.

Andrew couldn't speak. He kept staring at the files on the table.

“Oh! Meaning that she was actually right! How can you be so possessive my brother? Why? What do you want to gain from doing all that? My God! Bro Andrew, you really disappointed me. I never expected all these from you. And you even accused the innocent sister of lying. No wonder she just had to leave. This is so annoying... You of all people... A teacher of the word for that matter. How can you be so proud and domineering? The same pride made you not to admit in her presence that you really did all she said, instead you lied.”

“I... I... am so sorry sir.” Andrew stammered

“You should be sorry for yourself bro. The way I see her,

she is fed up with you and I doubt if she would ever come back. Her mind is made up already.”

“Ha! Please pastor, help me to talk to her..... I was only trying to protect what belongs to me, that was why I did all I did.”

“What belongs to you? Belongs to you indeed! Have you wedded her yet? Protect? Just listen to yourself! Is she your property? And if at all, she is even being protected in that your own definition, is that how to go about it? What a heresy!”

“Please sir it is not my fault. It’s because of what I once experienced in the hand of the lady I courted before I met her. That was why I decided to dominate her fully thinking that would make her mine forever.”

“Indeed. So, you want to damage her own self esteem just because of some silly experiences you had in your past. Is this the kind of counsel you will be giving to young brothers under you at church?”

“Pastor, I am so sorry for being so selfish. This wasn’t the real me actually before I changed... Please help me to beg Rosemary. I promise to make amendments... I wasn’t like this before. I thought the lady I dated before her misbehaved because I had no grip over her, that was why I was so hard on Rosemary. Please pastor, help me to talk to her... I don’t want to lose her... I was only pretending to be strong, I can’t let go of Rosemary. Please help me sir.

Pastor Victor sighed.

“Are you sure you really want this relationship? He asked.

“Yes pastor. I love her.”

“And you are ready to make amends where necessary? No more jealousy and possessiveness?”

“Yes sir.”

“Well then, I will talk to her. I promise... But the bulk of the work still lies in your hands. You know her better than I do.



Just swallow your pride, go to her and apologize... Allow her to have her freedom, let her take the job... There is so much joy in living the life you want to live and not what others want you to live... Bro, love is about giving and sacrifice. If you love her, you must allow her to make her choices and give her what she wants to make her happy.”

“Yes sir.” Andrew responded.

“Then get this understanding too. Don’t ever treat a woman like your property. She is an individual just like you. She deserves to live a life she desires, to pursue her visions and ambitions. Her fulfillment should not be tied to your own desires alone. Do you understand?”

Andrew nodded repeatedly and Pastor Victor continued.

“So, go and apologize to her. I will call her and explain some things to her too. All will be well.”

“Thanks pastor, please tell her I am really sorry sir. I will prefer you call her first. I am scared she might make good

her threats. I have never seen her speak to me the way she did before she left here now.”

“Don’t worry. I will talk to her.”

“Thanks pastor I really appreciate you. I will go now sir.”

“Alright, let’s have a word of prayer...”

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Vivian decided to visit her mum. She was so disturbed about what was happening in her marriage... So, after Alex left home to see a friend one morning, she also bathed and off she went to her mum’s place which was about an hour journey in the same city where they lived. She decided not to tell Alex about the visit because she knew that he would definitely prevent her from going. But she knew she had to go, all that was happening in her home seemed to be beyond her.

“In the multitude of counsels, there is safety.” She had told herself. She switched off her phone, so Alex wouldn’t be

able to reach her.

“Wow! How’s my baby girl doing?” Vivian’s mum asked her after she had settled comfortably in her mum’s living room.

“I am not fine mum.” Vivian replied.

“Why? You look so gloomy really. What is the matter my dear? I hope all is well?”

“All is not well mum.”

“Jesus! Have mercy on me. Don’t let my enemies mock me. Vivian, have you started having issues with your husband already? What exactly is the matter?”

“Mom, can we go to your room to talk? We need some privacy for this matter. The wall has ears.”

“Definitely my dear, after you... Loretta! Come and clear this dining table.” She called out to her maid.

“Let’s go my dear. I was planning to go out before you came in but with this your look, there is fire on the mountain. I am suspending whatever or wherever I will be going for today.

“Please tell Loretta to give me a cup of chill water mum. My head is seriously aching.”

“Sorry my dear. She will bring it to the bedroom. Just go, I will join you soon.”

Vivian went to her mum’s room and soon her mum joined her with Loretta coming behind her carrying a tray of water. After Loretta had gone, her mum asked,

“Vivian, what is the matter?”

“Mum, Alex refused to make love to me till now!” She answered without mincing words.

“What? Why?” Her mum asked in disbelief.

“I don’t know mum, up till now, no tangible reason, he said

he will explain to me later that it's all for the good of both of us."

"Ha-ha? This is unbelievable. It's unheard of... Wait, did you notice if his manhood rises at all?"

"Yes mum. I have checked that out... I still did this morning, he is okay. But I don't understand why he is refraining from touching me."

"Hm... And you are sure you didn't offend him before the wedding."

"No mum, we are good. Nothing at all... He just said I should give him some time, maximum three months."

"Jesus! What? Is he fasting? What kind of fasting is that without the consent of one's wife?"

"Mum, Alex is not fasting oh! He eats everyday!"

"This is mysterious! Her mum exclaimed."

“Yes mum. I am equally confused.”

Vivian’s mum sighed and thought for a while...

“You know what my daughter, be patient. A proverb says, “If the eye stares down, it will see the nose.” I want you to be patient and watchful. Your marriage is very important and you must treat it as such. Have you prayed over this issue?”

“Sincerely mum, I wouldn’t lie to you, I haven’t prayed about it at all. I don’t even know what exactly to pray about!”

“Hmmm, my daughter, marriage is a rose, a beautiful rose full of thorns, though, it may look beautiful on the outside, but there will be some issues to deal with within... No marriage is free of challenges... You must talk to God through prayers...”

“But not this early mum, I am losing my mind... I feel he has other issues he is hiding from me.” Vivian interrupted.

“Like I said earlier my dear, be patient and be prayerful. Whatever the matter is, God will intervene. It is too early for me to interfere directly into your affairs... I will be praying for you here. Just focus on taking care of your home for now and pray that the Lord, who is a revealer of secrets, should reveal everything that has been hidden and expose them. I am certain that something is wrong somewhere. It’s not normal for a man to refuse to touch his wife.”

“Thanks mum... I will do exactly what you said... Ermmm, I have to go now. I didn’t tell Alex about my coming here. So, I don't want to stay long.”

“Ha, oya come and be going oh! Don’t forget everything I told you. All will be well.”

“Thanks mum, you are the best.”

Vivian left her mum’s place and went home straight away so that Alex wouldn’t get home before her.

## CHAPTER 8

Caroline walked into the premises of Fragrance Bank. She entered the banking hall and approached one of the tellers.

“Good afternoon. Please, I want to see Mr. Fred Ikoku.”

“Good afternoon ma’am. Please do you have an appointment with him?” The lady asked cheerfully.

“No.”

“Okay ma’am what is your name?”

“Tell him Caroline ... Mrs. Caroline Thomas... She emphasized the Mrs. as if to assure the teller that she isn’t a call girl.

“Okay ma’am, take a seat over there while I put a call across to him.

“Thanks so much.” Caroline replied and went to sit. The teller soon got through with the call.



“Madam!” She called.

Caroline walked up to her.

“Go up the stairs ma’am, his office is the first on your right.”

“Okay... Thank you very much!”

“You are welcome ma’am.”

Caroline went up the stairs and knocked at the door of the office... The office of Fred Ikoku, the Branch Manager of Fragrance Bank, a senior colleague of hers at the University when she was still an undergraduate... He was two years ahead of her in the Department of Accountancy... They also attended the same fellowship while on Campus...

“Yes? Come in! Mr. Fred replied from within.

Caroline entered.

“Wow! Caroline is this you or I am dreaming?” He rose from his seat and gave her a hug.

“Quite an age!” He added.

“You can say that again... So good to see you again Fred. You have become a big man!”

“Same here... You look more matured and beautiful too. How are you? Please come and take a seat.”

He led her to the other side of the office where he normally relaxes. There were cushion chairs and a table in the middle... Caroline glanced around the office and felt impressed with the aura of affluence displayed in there... Fred opened his fridge, brought out a bottle of wine and picked two glasses.

“Be comfortable... Do you mind?” He asked, showing her the bottle of wine.

“Thanks, I hope it is not alcoholic.”

“Haba! No now, I can’t make you drunk and besides, I don’t take alcohol!”

They both laughed.

“I was so surprised when one of the tellers called me on the intercom earlier and mentioned your name... But how were you able to locate me? How come?”

He poured the cold wine into the glasses and handed over one of them to her.

“Thanks.” Caroline replied and added. “I actually met Praise at the wedding party of a friend late last year. She was the one who told me that you are the manager here.”

“Really? Praise-Praise... It’s been long we talked too. Since she relocated to the U.S, we only talk once in a while... That is life for you. We all cannot stay together for years. We got to move on.”

“Yea...” Caroline replied and sipped some wine. She said,

“Actually I didn’t just drop by to say hello. I actually wanted to see you for a very important issue. Can we just fix a place and time for our discussion? I understand that this is a work place.”

“Hmmm... No problem.... I hope all is well? Can’t you just brief me right away? I am less busy right now.” Fred replied.

“Are you sure?” Caroline asked

“Yea... Cock sure. Just go ahead, I am all ears.”

Caroline cleared her throat and said

“Fred, please I need a job. I mean, I am desperately in need of a job and I know that you can help me.”

“Really? Is that why you came? That won’t be a problem at all... And I was at first scared...” He smiled.

“That is all Fred. I really need a job.”

"It's okay... Let me have your number, I will send my email address to you via whatsapp... Just send your C.V to my email address. You can attach all the necessary credentials... That is not a big deal at all. I will do something about it. You are now a Chartered Accountant right?"

"Oh! Thanks Fred. I am really grateful! Yes, I am by God's grace."

"Good... What are friend for? I can't turn down a request from an old friend and not even Caroline of all people!" He laughed.

"I really appreciate it Fred. I will be grateful if it will work out eventually."

"If? Forget about 'if' Caroline. Just consider it done my dear. You have gotten a job already... Na me dey talk now." He laughed.

Caroline smiled excitedly. Fred continued,

“Eermmm, it may not be in this bank though and it may not even be a bank but I will make sure I fix you up where the pay will be good.”

“Anywhere Fred, as long as I am gainfully employed. It shouldn’t necessarily be your branch or a bank.”

“Good. It’s a deal then.”

“Thanks Fred. Wow! I am so happy right now!” Caroline replied excitedly.

Fred laughed as he watched her jubilating for joy on her seat

“Come, have you been home for that long? This one that you are so excited like this?”

“My dear, it’s a long story oh!”

“Really? Come on, tell me. How has it been with you?”

“Since I got married, I haven’t worked.”

“Really? That’s how many years now if I may ask?”

“Close to five years now.”

“Wow! Is it mother hood stress that made you take that decision or just that you couldn’t get a job?”

“Hmmm.....it is well...” Caroline replied, tears welling up in her eyes. Fred noticed the tears and said,

“Come on, I have always known you to be a strong woman, do you want to talk about it?”

“Not at all Fred... I will like to go now. I really appreciate your concern. I really do.”

“No Caroline. You can’t go like this... Just spill it out. What exactly brought tears to your face? Is it about your husband?”

“No... The issue is, I have no kids of my own yet, so my not working has nothing to do with motherhood stress... Actually, my parents once advised me not to take up a job yet so that the stress won't prevent me from getting pregnant... But right now I need to work. People go to work every day Fred and they still get pregnant. I am tired of staying back at home... My husband is a full time pastor now, his salary cannot cater for us both conveniently.”

“Hm... I see... Caroline, it is God that gives children. At the appointed time, He surely will. Don't give up. Just have faith.”

“Thanks Fred. I am so grateful... I will like to take my leave now... See you some other time.”

“Okay then. It's nice having you around... I will call you soon... Do take care of yourself, my regards to your husband.”

“Okay... Thanks, I will.”



Caroline left Fred's office and waited at the road side to get a cab to take her home. Her phone rang. She checked through her bag and brought it out. It was her husband.

“Hello.”

“Hi babe! Where are you?” Victor responded.

Caroline checked the screen of her phone again as if to be sure of the caller and then replied,

“Victor? Hehehehe! What came over you? Did you just resurrect? When last did you call me babe? It seems you just won a lottery right?”

“Aren't you my babe anymore? I won no lottery... I am just trying to be the man you married back then or isn't that what you want? Anyway where are you?”

“Somewhere in town, around Christopher way, just about going home.”

“I see... But you didn't tell me you would be going somewhere today.”

“Yea... I will gist you about it later.”

“Alright then.... Please, I will like to have fried rice and chicken for dinner with fruit juice too. I don't even know where the appetite came from.”

“Oh I see! That's why you called me babe right? All for fried rice and chicken... it's alright. I hear you.”

“No, not because of fried rice na!” He laughed. “You are my babe, I am trying to change, you want the man you married so I am trying to adjust, can't you see?”

“Okay oh... I pray so. I will stop at the market to get the ingredients now. See you later.”

“Alright then, will be home soon. Love you baby.”

“Love you too. Bye.”

He ended the call. Caroline smiled and said to herself,

“What suddenly came over the guy? Baby, baby up and down, since when? We shall see oh... I pray things go on like this.”

She waved down a taxi and entered.

## CHAPTER 9

Andrew knocked on the door of Rosemary's room. She opened it and frowned immediately she sighted him.

"Good evening sweetheart. Can I come in?" He pleaded.

"Come in if you want!" She replied nonchalantly and went inside.

Andrew entered and knelt beside her.

"I am so sorry about everything my love... I was just afraid of losing..."

"Do you listen to yourself? Rosemary interrupted him angrily.

"Calm down Rose... I am sorry..."

"Oh! Now I should calm down. After calling me a liar before Pastor Victor, you now come to apologize to me privately?"

“I am sorry... I already confessed to him that I am the liar. I am the bad person... Rose, you are all I need in a woman, please don't leave me...”

Rosemary looked away from him, her hands folded across her bosom. He tried to touch her but she shoved him away.

“Please stand up Andrew. I will think about it... Just leave me for now. I need to think... I am not sure of having peace of mind with you. I need a man that will give me peace of mind in marriage, not the one I will be fighting battles with... We are supposed to come together to chase ten thousand after marriage, not fighting each other.”

“I promise you Rose. I will change. I wasn't like this. Situation and circumstance turned me into who I am... Please, give me another chance to prove my genuine love to you.”

“Okay.... I have heard you. I will get back to you when I make up my mind.”

“Thanks dear... Please give us another chance please...”

He pleaded again.

“Andrew I need to think about it... By the way, I was about going out when you came in. I need to get some stuff at the market.”

“Are you sending me away?”

“Not at all. I just need to go quickly before nightfall.”

Andrew had no choice than to leave. They both left the house and parted ways at the junction of the market.

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“Who is it?” Alex asked after he heard a knock on the door.

“It’s me.” Vivian answered from outside.

Alex had reached home before her. He had tried her line several times but it was switched off. She got home a bit

late because she was held down by the traffic on the road.

“Oh! You are back after all... So, where have you been?” Alex inquired as he opened the door and Vivian entered.

Vivian walked to the fridge to get a cup of water. She gulped it down and replied,

“I went to see someone in town.”

“Really! So, I do not deserve to know that you were going out. You didn’t inform me about your whereabouts; your line had been switched off and that really got me worried.”

“Alex, can I go in and freshen up? We can talk about it later.” She replied.

“No! We must talk about it now! Alex growled.

He fixed his gaze on her. Vivian dropped her bag and sat on the couch in resignation.

“Yes? I am all ears. Where have been? I am your husband. I deserve to know about your movements.”

“I was at mum’s place.”

“Yea... I thought as much... So, why did you just leave home suddenly without informing me that you would be visiting her?”

“Alex, are you asking me why I left home? Oh please! I am losing my mind Alex. I am losing it already! The bliss and joy I so much looked forward to in my marriage is gradually become a mirage... You told me we can't have intercourse till about three months from now, and you expect me to keep calm about that? About such an abnormal situation? No, I can't... I needed to talk to someone so I could retain my sanity!”

Alex sighed and replied, “So, you think the next thing is for you to begin to announce it to family and friends right?”



“Announce? I only went to mum’s place to clear my head of too much worries. I don’t want to lose my sanity.”

“Okay... So, what did she say?”

“Nothing.” She replied. She stood up and walked towards the bedroom.

“What do you mean nothing? You are walking out on me?”

“Alex please, I am really exhausted. I need to go and have a shower.”

She walked to the bedroom and began to remove her clothes and accessories. Alex entered the bedroom too and sat on the bed watching her. As she was about to enter the bathroom, she stopped in her track and said,

“Let’s have shower together.”

“Why? I don’t feel like. It’s a bit cold tonight.”

“At least if you deprive me of sex, we can just have some romantic moment together, you know.”

Alex sat on the chair as firm as a rock, not moved a bit by the sight of her half nude wife.

“What kind of man are you?” Vivian blurted out in deep frustration. “Tell me Alex, are you a ghost? What are you? Do I have to seduce you over and over before we have sex? Oh my God! I am in a deep mess!” She murmured.

Alex stood up and held her shoulders.

“Vivian just try and be patient. I am not a ghost. I will explain everything to you soon.” And with that, he walked out of the bedroom.

“This marriage of a thing is filled with surprises.” Vivian whispered to herself and navigated slowly to the bathroom to have a shower...

She soon got through and afterwards slipped into her

nightie... Alex walked into the bedroom with a tray in his hands.

“Sweetheart, I made you dinner.” He announced.

“Thanks. I am not hungry.” Vivian responded without looking at him.

“Come on, it’s your favourite.” He persuaded her...

He moved closer to her and placed the dish on the table near the bed. He hugged her but she pushed him off and said,

“Wait, is this a drama or something? Why all these? One minute you are angry, the next minute, you are trying to be nice. What kind of a roller coaster relationship are we having, in the early days of our marriage at that?!”

Alex frowned slightly and sighed deeply. He sat on the bed and drew her to sit near him. She turned her face away from him. There was silence for a few seconds... He cleared his

throat breaking the silence and said,

“You know what sweetheart, everything will be fine. Just trust me okay? Don’t allow the devil to come in between us. I know what I am doing, you just trust me... All of these will be over very soon, I mean it. If Jesus tarries, we will have a long-long time to enjoy each other. Give me just a little more time.”

Vivian bowed her head and responded,

“Little time? Okay what will you be doing with little time? Fasting, praying? What? Tell me, what secret are you hiding from me? Why can’t you have sex with your lawfully wedded wife? It is so obvious that a lot of things are wrong somewhere. Just tell me the truth. Are you a cultist?”

“Blood of Jesus! God forbid! I am not in to any form of cultism my dear... Please be patient with me, I will tell you when it’s time.” Alex interjected.

Vivian burst into tears.

“This marriage is just a scam, a mirage!” She cried.

“No my dear, please it’s not. Stop crying... Can you just do something for me? Eat your meal and be refreshed before it gets cold. I will get you some cold juice from the refrigerator.”

Vivian sniffed, nodded her head slowly and wiped her tears. Alex made her sit comfortably and placed the tray of food on her laps.

“Let me go get some juice, I will be right back.” He said and left the room.

.....

Victor arrived home earlier than usual that evening. Caroline just got done with dinner... She dished out some fried rice and chicken into a plate. She then set it on a tray and carried it to the dining table where Victor was eagerly waiting to be served. He smiled broadly as she brought in the tantalizing plate of rice.

“I trust my darling!” Victor said excitedly.

Caroline pretended not to hear him. She set the plate of rice before him and turned towards the bedroom door. Victor grabbed her wrist and asked.

“Aren’t we eating together?”

“I have eaten already.” She replied dryly.

“Why?” That is unlike you. You know you always waited for me so we could eat dinner together.” He challenged her.

“Since when? So, you just noticed that really? Congrats... I hope it is not that you just remembered that you have a wife?” She laughed sarcastically.

“I am sorry dear. It’s the demanding work of God. Please bear with me.” He apologized

“Okay can I take my leave now? She asked.

“No please sit with me at least.”

“Why?”

“Just to talk... It’s been long we did that you know.”

“Talk about what exactly?” Caroline asked further.

“About us.”

“Okay...” She replied and pulled a chair to sit on.”

“I’m all ears.” She announced.

Victor devoured his plate of rice like a famished lion.

“Hm... Tastes so good. Thanks darling!” Victor said.

Caroline’s face broke into a smile.

“You are welcome.” She replied, glad that he loved the food.

Victor continued to eat...

“So, when should we move to our new location? When do you think is convenient for us?” He asked after gulping down a glass of water.

“What location?” Caroline asked.

“I mean the new town they transferred us to of course.”

“Is that what you wanted to discuss with me? And you said you wanted to talk about us?”

“Yea, it’s part of it, at least it is important to us now, isn’t it?”

Caroline hissed, stood up immediately and walked out of the dining room. She went to the bedroom without saying a word. Victor finished up his meal and went to join her in the bedroom. Caroline was already on the bed, her back turned to him. He laid beside her and placed his hand on her shoulder. He rubbed it and tried to place a kiss on her cheek.



Caroline pushed him away and snapped angrily,

“What is it?”

“Can’t I touch my wife again?”

“Oh really? So you have a wife now?” Caroline responded as she sat up angrily.

She adjusted her night wear to cover her bust and laid down again, turning her back to him. Victor tried to touch her again. She slapped his hand, sat up again and shouted,

“Look Victor, I don’t want trouble in this house tonight... Ha-ha? So, it is only when you need sexual gratification that you remember there is someone at home right? No wonder you came back home early... That is what you want to be doing right? To satisfy yourself when you need to, then later leave me to burn alone when I need you?”

“It’s not what you think my dear...” Victor tried to calm her but she interrupted him.

“It’s not what I think? I am not a baby Victor. Do you know the number of nights you left me so cold and lonely? It’s either you travelled for a ministration or you were home but not just in the mood for unjustifiable reasons. I have been enduring that all these while but now that you feel horny, you want immediate satisfaction, forgetting all you have put me through... It doesn’t work that way husband man. That is selfishness of the highest order. Wickedness in high places!”

She hissed, stood up from the bed and walked out of the bedroom.

“Caroline! Come back here!” He called after her.

## CHAPTER 10

“Nonsense!” Caroline shouted angrily, shaking her feet vigorously as she sat on the sofa in the living room...

“Since I have been burning alone, he never cared, now he wants immediate satisfaction for his sexual desire tonight, no way! Selfishness of the highest order. You will also feel what I have been enduring tonight.” She hissed angrily.

“What is the meaning of what you just did? Victor charged at her. “So you want me to beg you for sex right? After all these days, should I be denied for just today?”

“Okay oh Pastor, who told you that you have the right to deny your wife of sex while you get your own satisfaction whenever you desire it? Enh? Who says so?”

“I never denied you. The reasons why I couldn’t do it then was obvious to you.” He replied.

“E yah... Really? My own reason too should be obvious to you! See, I don’t even have time to trade words with you

right now. My own is that, you are not having your way tonight. Period!"

"You must do it and you will." Victor commanded.

"I must?"

"Yes, you must! Why are you behaving like Jezebel? Are you the only wife in this compound? Ha-ha? Must we fight always? How many times do we hear other couples fighting?"

"That is because those husbands are caring and understanding unlike you!" She shot back.

"No! You are the most stubborn and quarrelsome wife in this compound!"

"Really? Thanks for the compliment! And I will show you how stubborn I am indeed tonight!"

"That is your business, not mine... All I know is that having

access to your body is my right... I paid your bride price and I must have access to it tonight!"

"You must be joking! Come and rape me now!"

"Well, if that is what will happen, so be it!"

He grabbed her legs and tried to force himself on her. She screamed and kicked him hard on his testicles with her foot. He collapsed on the floor and passed out...

Caroline rose up slowly and bent low to check him where he laid on the floor. She started to panic when she noticed that he seemed to be lifeless. She shook him vigorously.

"Victor! Sweetheart! I am sorry... Please wake up. I will allow you now." She whispered in fear.

Victor didn't respond... She screamed loudly with fear and tried to lift him up.

"Somebody help meeeeeeee!" She screamed again.

There was a hard knock on the door. Caroline quickly rose up to get the door. The couple in the neighboring flat rushed in. They had heard her scream...

“What happened?” The husband asked.

“It was an accident.” Caroline replied with a shaky voice.

“We had an argument, we struggled with each other and... And... And then he slumped in the process.” She stuttered, trying to cover up the actual action that led to her husband's collapse.

“Oh my God! Let's get him to the hospital fast!” He advised.

Caroline started weeping loudly. They managed to lift Victor up, carried him out of the house and to the car. Caroline wept silently all the way to the hospital.

“How do I tell people that I was preventing my husband from having sex with me? Oh God. Please keep my

husband alive for me.” She prayed silently in her heart.

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Vivian stirred on the bed and opened her eyes slowly. She reached out to touch her husband but he wasn't in bed. She picked her phone to check the time. She sat up and yawned.

“It's 7:30 am already! I really had a long sleep!” She whispered tiredly.

She got up and thought,  
“Where is Alex?”

She opened the door of the bathroom.

“Alex!” She called.

“He is not here.”

The bedroom door opened. Alex walked in with a tray of food in his hands. He smiled at her.

“You really had a long sleep. Courtesy of my sumptuous meal!” He teased her... He placed the tray on the table beside the bed and planted a kiss on her forehead. He held her hands and looked into her eyes.

“How was your night my dear?”

“Fine sweetheart and yours?” She responded.

“Great! So, eat your breakfast and let’s get ready for church.” He said pointing to the tray.

“Again? Mr. Nice. You brought me dinner in bed last night, and breakfast again this morning. I hope you are this nice and you will continue to be.” She smiled.

“Babe, it’s our honeymoon. Forget about the distractions earlier. We are supposed to enjoy every bit of it together.”

Vivian smiled...



“Yes give me that smile always.”

She laughed loudly. Alex smiled too...

“What do you have there?” She asked.

“Corn flakes and milk.”

“Thanks. Have you eaten too?”

“Not yet. Probably when I get back from church. I don’t have an appetite this morning. I will go ahead to bathe now... Enjoy your meal and be fast with it so that we won’t be late.”

“Okay... Thanks dear. I can’t wait to be in church. I have missed Sunday service plus I am eager to meet your church people.”

“I am sure they are eager to see us too, especially you.”

Alex replied from the bathroom.

Very soon, he came out. Vivian also bathed and they both got dressed.

“Should I put on this long gown?” Vivian asked.

“Yes.” Alex replied without looking at her... He concentrated on the tie he was knotting in front of the portrait mirror attached to the door of their wardrobe.

“It will complement your grey tie and trousers.” She remarked.

“Anything will do.” Alex replied still focused on his tie.

“Okay how about my shoes?”

“Oh-oh-oh! Vivian, you know I am not really into all these things. I trust your sense of fashion. Just get something nice and let’s zoom off. We are getting late already.”

“Na wa for you oh! You are not concerned about your bride’s first appearance in your church. At least, just look at the shoes and say. 'This one is okay for you.' Period!”

“Chai! Married men dey try oh!” Alex murmured.

“You said what?”

“Nothing!” He smiled. “You can put on the silver heel shoes, I will be waiting outside. I need to warm the car engine and do the necessary checkups...”

Some minutes later, Alex called from the living room.

“Sweetheart, aren’t you done yet?”

“I am coming now!” Vivian replied from the room.

She soon came out dressed in a beautiful short but free magenta gown with silver heel shoes and hat to match.

“Wow!!! This is so cool! You look so gorgeous and breath taking.” Alex complimented her.

She walked towards him majestically like a beauty pageant and whirled around slowly as she reached him. Alex held

her by the waist and kissed her cheek.

“No doubt, you are really the latest bride in town and of course you will definitely be the most beautiful woman in church today!”

“Thanks honey. I am blushing!” She replied.

“After you my Angel.” He ushered her out of the room while she smiled joyfully all the way.

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“Doctor, please how is my husband? How about the result of the scan? Hope nothing serious?” Caroline asked hastily as she entered the doctor’s office. She had relayed the true version of what actually happened to the doctor when they got to the hospital. She ensured the couple who helped her to bring her husband to the hospital were not there then....

“Calm down Mrs...”

“Thomas.” Caroline completed his statement.

“Mrs. Thomas, all is well okay? Your husband is fine. I have gone through the results of the tests and scan too... Everything is perfectly okay. No cause for alarm at all. All he needs now is just some rest and that will be all... Every necessary medication he needs has been administered to him, so he will be fine.” Doctor responded.

“Oh thank God!” Caroline sighed. “Thank you so much doctor. My mind is at rest now.”

“You are welcome madam. But if you wouldn’t mind and if you don’t see me as just a doctor, that I am, can you explain briefly what really led to this incident? I just have this feeling in my spirit that you need some counsel.”

Caroline dropped her chin on her right palm with her right elbow resting of the arm of the chair. She sighed and replied,

“Thanks doctor we actually had an argument which

eventually led to a quarrel... My husband is a pastor in one of the Pentecostal churches in town..."

"Really?" Doctor replied.

"Yes sir." She replied and rested here back on the chair, wearing a totally exhausted look.

The doctor leaned forward on his table to pay a rapt attention to what Caroline was saying. She continued,

"Since we got married, all has been well. Our misunderstandings started when he resigned from his secular job and became a pastor, that was about three years ago. He had claimed that God called him... Since then, my husband literally abandoned me and got consumed with the zeal for the pastoral ministry." She paused as a few drop of tears escaped through her eyes.

"It's okay Mrs Thomas, just let it out. It will make you feel better."

Caroline blew her nose in her handkerchief and continued.

“At first, I played along, hoping he would come around. I tried to be understanding, I reasoned that God’s work demands a great commitment and devotion, so I supported him...

But as time went on, I couldn’t take it any longer. Victor was so into ministry that he hardly had time for me and that was how it had been till now. It’s so bad that even if I didn’t make my hair for days, my husband would not even notice it at all. Hmmm... Doctor, he hardly stayed at home and whenever he did, he sits in the study room all day long. Our sexual life went down the drain. Whenever I felt horny, he came up with many excuses. It’s either he was tired, he was fasting, he has a ministration he had to prepare for and so on... In short, I got tired. It’s just as if someone else had replaced the man I married... Yesterday evening after dinner, he asked for sex and I turned him down too... I wanted him to feel the pain I had been feeling... We started arguing and he tried to force himself on me, I kicked him on his testicles and he collapsed. It was an accident doctor. I didn’t mean to injure my husband. I love him...” She started

crying again.

“Hmmmmm... It’s alright madam. Doctor replied. “Your husband is fine. Let’s thank God for that. Now, have you ever prayed that God should give you the wisdom to handle all of these?”

“I won’t deceive you doctor. My husband’s attitude is really driving me crazy that most times, I don’t even feel like praying. I would just be so depressed sincerely...”

“Don’t be depressed my sister, marriage is a life-long contract. You can’t afford to give up at this stage... Be more open in your communications with your husband and pray for wisdom too... Wisdom will help you to handle this matter the proper way you should... The Holy spirit will give you the wisdom to use to settle all of these, if only you can pray to Him for help... Remember the Bible says in Proverbs 14 verse 1: "The wise woman builds her home but the foolish pulls it down with her hands."

Be patient with your husband madam and don't ever be aggressive about the matter, it won't yield a good result, as



you can see... I pray God will help you and lead you aright.”

“Thanks doctor. I really appreciate your counsel.”

“You are welcome madam... So, by tomorrow unfailingly, he should be discharged.”

“Okay sir. Thanks so much!”

“You are welcome... Just stay strong and talk to God about your challenges. He will see you both through it all... And please whenever he comes to you, never refuse him again. Don't allow the enemy to have a foothold in your home. All will be well.”

Caroline nodded, thanked the doctor again, and left his office.

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“Hey! Sweetie, Happy Sunday!” Andrew cooed behind Rosemary after church service was over. She looked

behind started walking away as soon as she sighted him.

“I wish you the same.” She murmured and left the spot.

“Rose! Haba, wait now. Do you mean you haven’t forgotten about all the misunderstandings we had? Come on...”

“Andrew, I have told you I wanted to think about it... Now, I have made up my mind... It’s not going to work between us. Maybe we aren’t meant to end up as a couple... We frequently have issues even in courtship. We are not getting along well, can’t you see?”

“Don’t worry dear, I promise to adjust.”

“Yea... That is what you keep saying over the years... Andrew, I can’t take it any longer. You are too selfish and possessive for my liking. A broken courtship is better than a broken marriage. I don’t want my marriage to be a hell...”

“Neither me Rose. I want us to have a blissful marriage.”

“I’m sorry Andrew. It can’t work between us.”

“Is there any other thing you are not telling me Rose? Is there someone else?”

“Andrew, you don’t get it. I am really after my future, my home. I need peace... Marriage is a life contract, so it is not about having someone else. I made up my mind to quit so I won’t regret not doing so later.”

“Sister Rose!” Someone called out from behind them, interrupting her speech.

Rose looked back and saw Paul, one of the brothers at church approaching them.

“Oh! Bro Paul. I am sorry. I nearly forgot about the visitation. Is it time for us to go?” Rosemary asked.

“Yes. We are set to leave.” Paul replied after saying hi to Andrew.

“I will see you later Andrew.” Rose said as she was about to follow Paul.

“But I am not done talking to you!” Andrew retorted.

Rose gave him a disdainful stare.

“We have a visitation appointment now, I am a part of the team.” She replied and left without waiting for a response from Andrew.

Andrew frowned as he watched them both chatting away happily. He felt so jealous and sank in a nearby chair.

“I suspect this guy... He is always over her... I love you Rose and I am ready to change. I won't allow someone else to take you away from me. He murmured.

## CHAPTER 11

Pastor Victor opened his eyes slowly and tried to sit up on the hospital bed.

“Oh! Thank God. Let me help you sit up well honey.”

Caroline said and placed her hands on his shoulders.

“What am I doing in a hospital?” Victor asked as he looked around him... Paul, Rosemary and one other sister were in the ward too... They all greeted him.

“Bro Paul, sister Rose, haha? Sister Meg... what’s happening here?” Victor asked, still puzzled at the fact that he was in a hospital.

“You were hospitalized after the injury you had dear.”

Caroline tried to explain.

“Injury? Where? How? Oh! I see...”

Caroline quickly interrupted him in order to prevent him from speaking further. People mustn't get to know that they

had a fight... At least not their church members.

“Honey, rest. The doctor said you should get lots of rest.”

“Sorry sir. The Lord is your strength. We actually decided to check on you after service today. I mean, we the visitation team. We missed you and mummy at church sir.” Paul announced.

“Oh! Thanks so much. So, how was the service today?”

“It was fine sir.” Rose and Meg replied.

“Thanks for the visit. I so much appreciate... God bless you all.”

“Amen. You are welcome sir... We will like to leave now, so you can rest. God will perfect your healing sir.” Paul replied.

“Amen... Thank you.” Victor replied.

Paul left the hospital ward with his team...

Caroline turned to Victor.

“I am sorry honey. I am truly sorry for all that happened. I didn't intend to do this to you... Please!”

Victor laid on the bed, turning his back to her. He refused to respond to her pleas...

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Alex visited his friend Arthur at his place that Sunday afternoon.

“So, you are okay with just juice? You have started proving married man to me now abi? You don't want to eat here so that Vivian will not fight you if you don't eat her food when you get home.” Arthur teased Alex as he settled down beside him on the couch in his living room.

“Abi now.” Alex replied and continued. “You know one thing that pains women a lot is if after sweating for several

minutes in the kitchen, they put down the food and you say you are not hungry or you just eat little out of it... My brother, you don't declare war because of that oh!"

They both laughed out loud and sipped their juice.

"Alex, you are really looking good oh. Just one week, you are already glowing like this." Arthur complimented him.

"Really? Thanks... You too, do go and marry oh!"

"Abeg, na you go tell me abi? So, because you first me marry now, you dey prove levels... Go and sit down somewhere jor."

They both laughed again...

Arthur changed the TV channel to a sports station. They were showing a live football match... They started watching the football match with so much frenzy...

"Arthur, I have a reason for coming to see you oh! My friend,



trouble is brewing in my home already as we speak.” Alex said after a while.

“Trouble ke?” Arthur replied as he lowered the volume of the TV set. “God forbid bad thing oh. Guy what’s that?”

“That same issue oh my brother. Vivian is not taking it lightly at all.”

“Really?” Ha! What will you do now?”

“You know, she’s kind of getting scared... She was like it’s something too strange so she’s worked up somehow.”

“Hmmmmmm... But did you use the logic I taught you?” Arthur asked.

“Which one? Fasting? Oh boy, that one can’t work for me oh! How can I pretend to be fasting every day when we are home together? I simply told her that I am not ready for it for some important reasons, that she will understand better later on...”

Arthur interrupted him with a loud laugh.

“What’s funny now? You have started your hilarious games abi?”

“Sorry, but it’s funny now... Alex, are you for real? How can you tell her that for some important reasons, you will like to abstain from touching her and you expect her to understand? No now, you fuck up big time bro.”

“So, what do I do now?”

“Hmmm... Let me brainstorm for a while.” Arthur replied.

“And it’s like she already told her mum about it.” Alex put in.

“Really? Chai! Then you must act fast. Let me think about it, I will feed you back... But wait, this thing never work still, like whenever you are in bed beside her, it does not prick you for real?”

“See, I am fed up. I don’t know what is wrong with me or maybe she is the one something is wrong with sef... After the last doctor I visited treated me before the wedding, I expected to see visible changes. But it's still the same. ”

“Maybe you should just tell her about it then... At least, you both will be able to pray and fight it out together. Abi?”

“Arthur, I can’t imagine doing that... I can’t bring myself to telling her, I can’t... How will I say it? HmMMM... And come to think of it, whenever I wake up in the morning, it rises but once I sight my wife like this and I think of doing it, everything comes down. Arthur, I have tried several medications to no avail... Since our courtship days, I noticed whenever she was around me back then, everything would just come down but once she leaves, I felt strong again... Though it was an advantage back then because we wanted a pure courtship... But now it is an abnormality. I need to do the needful. I am fed up... How can I live like this? Legally married, yet I can’t enjoy my wife... It's not that I have never had sex before I met her, so what the hell could be wrong?”

“That is why I said you should tell her. I feel this is more of a spiritual battle. Tell her so you can both pray about it together.”

“Hmmm... Okay then... I will try to do so and give you a feedback. I thought as much too... It couldn't have been ordinary.”

“I feel it isn't... Just try to tell her and if you can't do it alone, then carry your pastor along. Try that.”

“Okay bro. Thanks always.”

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## **THE FOLLOWING EVENING.**

Victor had been discharged from the hospital and they had gone back home.

“Dinner is ready. Should I bring it here?” Caroline asked her husband.

Victor had been lying on the bed for over an hour relaxing with a Christian novel he had been reading... He turned to her and sat up.

“What if I died after that blow you dealt me? What if I didn’t survive it? You would have just mourned me for a while and then go ahead and remarry? Is that your plan Caroline?”

“I reject it! I shall not be a widow in Jesus name.” She replied sharply... She settled beside him on the couch, massaging his arms slowly and said,

“Honey, even if we are having issues in this marriage, God forbid I wish you dead... I am sorry for all that happened... I never meant to harm you in any way. You know I love you and you are all that I have.” She hugged him and kissed his forehead. “I am so sorry dear... Truly sorry... And I miss you too...”

“Hmmmmmm... I’ts alright... If you did miss me, you shouldn’t have refused me that day.”

“Let us not go over that again honey, let us forget the past and thank God for everything, okay? Come and eat dinner so you can take your drugs on time.”

“Okay then.” He replied and followed her to the dining table while she held on to his hand like a mother leading her toddler.

\*\*\*\*\*

Alex and Vivian both sat beside each other on the bed. Vivian was busy chatting with a friend on her phone while Alex was flipping through a magazine. A call came through Vivian’s phone.

“Sweetheart, it’s mama, your mum.” Vivian said.

“Really? Enh, pick it.” He responded, his eyes fixed on the magazine he was reading.

“Hello mama.” Vivian greeted her mum in law.

“Hello my darling daughter! How are you doing?”

“I am fine mama. How are you too?”

“I am fine too... I can sense you are doing fine too through your voice.”

Vivian laughed and replied,

“Mama, Alex is taking care of me big time.”

“Are you sure or you are just covering up for him? See, if he ever did anything funny, tell me oh! I still have the cane I used on him when he was a child. I can still flog him, you know?”

Vivian laughed out loud. Alex collected the phone from her.

“Hello mama, what are you both talking about that she is laughing like this?”

“Hey! Mr man, what is your own? Mind your own business and give the phone to the owner jare. Jealous soul.”

Enh-enh... me abi? No wahala... He gave the phone back to Vivian.

“Hello ma.”

“Hello Vivian. Don’t mind him joor... So, you two should take good care of yourself okay? I am sure you are enjoying your honeymoon.”

“Yes mum. It’s been fun all the way.”

“That’s good... I just wanted to check on you. Take care of yourselves okay?”

“Okay mama.”

“Goodnight my daughter. The Lord be with you both.”

“Amen. Goodnight ma.”



She dropped the phone on the bed and smiled.

"Mama and her humorous nature... She is such a nice and kindhearted mother. May the Lord preserve her for us." She prayed.

"Amen oh! That's my mum for you." Alex replied smiling.  
"Ermmm... I want to say something... Ermmm... Never mind."

"What? Say it now." Vivian urged him.

"Hmmm... I want spaghetti but never mind, I'll prepare it myself." He replied.

Vivian laughed and said,

"Dont worry, I will prepare it for you."

She left the room immediately.

"How do I bring myself to telling her?" Alex thought.

\*\*\*\*\*

Andrew paced through his room, his hands on his waist. He has been dialing Rosemary's number for the past thirty minutes but she didn't pick up. He kicked the wall furiously.

"Aaaaaaaargh! I have really gone overboard with this girl. I really have... I thought I was too slack with Francisca, that was why she treated me the way she did and now this? I have been firm with Rose, probably too firm, now she has had it to the fullest and doesn't want to see me again. Why am I so unlucky with ladies? If Rose leaves me, I will never forgive myself." He kept talking to himself...

He sat angrily on the bed and broke down in tears.

"Andrew, you were not like this before. No, you used to be a very caring and gentle young man. How come you choked her this much to the extent that she doesn't want to see you again? Come to think of it, what the hell is wrong with the work of a receptionist in a hotel as long as there is trust? Oh

God! I thought she would comply to my instructions just like before... Who will I call to help me to talk to her now?....

No Andrew, you can still talk to her. Put your pride behind you and apologize the more... I know Rosemary, she will never refuse me, she won't. She is just still angry. I am sure." He soliloquized.

\*\*\*\*\*

Rosemary on the other hand was sitting on her bed all through the period that Andrew kept calling her... His call came in again. She hissed and dropped the phone on the bed.

"My mind is made up Andrew. I am done with you!" She hissed and picked up her bible to read.

She was about to pray and retire to bed for the night when her phone rang again. It was Andrew!

"Andrew again?" She hissed and ignored the call... She prayed and lied on her bed but she was unable to sleep.

“Lord, should I give Andrew one last chance?” She let out a loud sigh. “Hmmmmm... Father, please let your will be done in my life... I don't want to make a mistake... I prayed about Andrew before I started this relationship and I was convinced, he was convinced too. I am sure he is your choice for me... He is so nice and zealous for your service Lord but he is just too jealous and possessive... Should I still go ahead with him Lord? As much as I don't like this character of his, yet I feel I should know your mind concerning my decision to leave him as I can't take a step without you... What do you really want me to do? Lord speak to me. I am so pissed with his attitude and I feel like just ending everything with him... I love him but his attitude is driving me crazy! I await your leading as usual Lord...”

She prayed.

## CHAPTER 12

“It seems your phone is ringing in the bed room.” Victor told Caroline while they were watching Television after eating dinner.

“Oh! I will go get it now.” She replied and quickly headed to the master’s bedroom where she had earlier left her phone. “Who could that be at this time of the night?” She murmured as she went to get the phone. She picked the call.

“Hello! Who am I on to?”

“Hello Caroline, this is Fred.”

“Oh! Fred, I don’t have this number... How are you doing? Thanks for the other time.”

“Yea... It’s a pleasure... So, you need to report at JOANS FINANCES tomorrow for an interview by 10:00am. Though the interview shouldn’t be a threat... You will get the job. I have a colleague of mine there. She is their HR

Manager... You know the company right?"

"Really? Wow! I am so excited. Thanks so much Fred, God will bless you real good."

"What are friends for? Ensure you get there in good time okay? I hope you know the company... I am sure you do..."

"Sure, I do. Thanks so much."

"Okay, Good... So take care and best of luck... my regards to your husband."

"Thanks Fred. My regards to your family too. I will call you tomorrow after the interview."

"Alright then... Bye."

Caroline sighed and started smiling excitedly. She walked calmly back to the living room not wanting her husband to suspect anything.

“Who was that?” Victor asked as soon as Caroline settled on the couch with him.

“An old colleague back at school. I am not sure you know him.”

“Hmmmmm... His name?”

“Fred.”

“Fred... Fred... which Fred? The same guy that used to disturb you a lot when we first met?”

“No, not that one dear.”

“Are you sure?”

“Of course... Ha! You enh? You too dey jealous. This Fred is not the one you used to know. This one was a senior colleague at school... We just got each other’s contact again through a female friend of mine.”

“Hmmmmm... Okay, I hope it will be a platonic friendship. Be careful of old time friends oh!”

“It’s nothing dear. Fred is not even that kind of person...”

“Okay.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Vivian turned in her sleep... then she woke up suddenly startled. She just had a nightmare. She quickly sat up in fear and grabbed her Bible by the side of the bed and began to pray seriously. She slapped Alex’s thigh trying to wake him up.

“Wake up Alex!”

“Hmmmmm? What?” Alex asked, still sleeping.

“Wake up! I just had a terrible nightmare. Let us pray.”

Alex murmured, turned to the other side and continued



sleeping. Vivian shook him rigorously again. He grumbled,

“Oh oh oh God! What is it now?”

“Please wake up. I had a very scary nightmare.” Vivian answered, still frightened.

He yawned and replied,

“What is it all about?”

"Let us just pray first." She replied.

She quickly held his hands and knelt on the bed, she started to pray.

“Father Lord, I come against every spirit of demonic dreams in this house in the name of Jesus. Fire of the Holy Ghost, consume every evil power in this environment right now...”

Alex lazily replied "Amen... Amen," at intervals, then he later slept off again...

Vivian shook him vigorously to snap him out of sleep, all to no avail. She later left him alone and rose up, praying fervently around the bedroom.

\*\*\*\*\*

The following morning, Vivian was setting breakfast on the dining table. Alex came out of the bedroom fully dressed for work. They both ate their breakfast silently. Vivian was the first to break the silence.

“Sweetheart, were you that tired that you couldn’t join me in the prayers last night? I told you I had a nightmare and I was really scared. All you could do was just to doze off while I was praying...”

Alex continued eating without responding to her complaint.

“Alex, I expect you to be the head in everything. In this house, you should be the one leading the prayers, not I.”

“Says who my dear, says who? I am sorry I slept off, I was just too tired... But see, whoever is led can pray, not necessarily the husband... You know I went to bed late, I was busy discussing with some of my clients on phone till late in the night, so I was really exhausted.”

“It’s okay... But remember God’s word that says; One shall chase a thousand and two?”

“Ten thousand.” Alex replied.

“Good.” Vivian answered.

“Thank you my Sunday School teacher. I have to go now.”  
He said and rose from his seat.

“And don’t you care to know what the dream I had was all about?”

“I am really sorry dear. I really have to go now. We will talk about it when I am back. You know I told you some of our goods will be arriving this morning, I must catch up with

those guys early enough so they won't tamper with my goods. I get to go."

Vivian shrugged her shoulders and replied,

"Can we at least have a word of prayer before you leave?"

Alex picked his bag in haste, kissed her forehead and said,

"I am sorry dear, please pray for us... I will pray on my way as I go... See you soon... Love you!"

And with that, he left the house.

"Okay, take care dear, byeeeeeee..." Vivian called after him.

As soon as her husband left, Vivian sighed and sat back at the dining table soliloquizing.

"God, what is happening in my marriage? Something is not just right. In short, many things are out of place... God help me."

\*\*\*\*\*

Caroline dressed in a smart black skirt suit with a pink camisole and pink shoes to match. She checked herself in the mirror and picked up her black handbag. Victor was still sleeping... He turned slightly in his sleep as Caroline was about to step out of the bedroom. She checked him to see if he was awake but he was still fast asleep. She removed her shoes, tiptoed out of the bedroom and closed the door gently. She got to the living room and said to herself,

“Thank God, the drugs doctor gave him is making him sleep well. Nothing will stop me from attending this interview and taking up this job offer. She picked a pen and wrote on a piece of paper:

“I have gone to town... Will be back soon. Your breakfast is in the food flask on the dining table... Love you.”

She placed the paper on the table in the living room and placed the flower vase on it. She quickly slipped into her shoes and left the house.

\*\*\*\*\*

The intercom on Rosemary's reception desk rang. She left what she was doing and picked it.

"Hello sir... Okay sir... Alright sir... I will do just that..."

She dropped the receiver and sat back on her chair trying to search for a file. Just as she settled down, Andrew walked into the reception room. She jumped to her feet immediately she sighted him.

"Andrew, what are you doing here? I hope you know that I am on duty at the moment, why coming here without even calling me ahead?"

"Easy Rose...Please take it easy... Can I see you for a few minutes?"

"No! You can't even see me for a few seconds. I am at work and it is just too early in the morning. Are you trailing me again? You want to know how many men talk to me per day right?"

"No dear... You haven't you been picking my calls Rose? That is why I had to come... Why have you been this cold to me? At least, pity me now... I have been calling and calling all these while..."

"Pity? You didn't pity me when you told pastor that I was lying..."

"I am so sorry about that dear, I have..."

Please, don't bother about apologies... I already told you that it's over between us. Don't you get it?"

"Just like that?"

"Yes! Just-like-that! And don't ever come looking for me again." She replied, even though she still sensed it within her that God hasn't given her a go ahead to end the relationship.

Andrew sighed. Rosemary sat back on her chair and

started to flip through some files, ignoring his presence.

“Okay, can you grant me one last chance to see you after close of work today? I need to explain some things to you. Please don’t say no. At least, consider the fact that I had to come here first before I report to work. Please don’t let my coming be a waste.”

“Okay.” She replied with a frown on her face. Her eyes still glued to the files.

“Thanks... So, what time should I pick you up?”

“I don’t know yet. You can call me around 4pm, I’ll let you know if it will be possible for us to see. Please go now, I am not comfortable with you being here. I don’t want to get into any trouble with my boss.”

Just then, a fine young man walked into the reception room.

“Go now, I need to attend to a customer!” She whispered fiercely to Andrew.



“Okay, I will call you later.” He replied.

The young man approached Rosemary’s desk.

“Good morning sir! You are welcome to Sam's Hotel. How may I be of help?” She greeted the guest cheerfully.

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Victor was reading his bible in the living room when Caroline walked into the house. It was past midday.

“Hello darling! How have you been?” She cooed as she bent low to kiss his forehead. Victor avoided her and replied,

“And where have you been? You didn’t tell me you would be going out today.”

“Yes darling. I am so sorry... It was very urgent and since you were fast asleep, I had to leave. Did you see your

breakfast on the table?”

“Yes I did but I haven’t eaten it yet. I only took some tea. I don’t have an appetite for now... I called your line severally, you refused to pick up. It was later on that I saw the SMS you sent. So, where exactly were you?”

“Don’t worry darling, I will give you the full gist soon, let me warm your food first. It’s past noon already, you need to eat so you can take your drugs... I will also need to fix lunch in good time, so let me go in and change. I will be right back.”

She kissed him again and walked to the bedroom, humming a song.

“Why is she so excited?” He thought. “I just hope she will continue to be like this... So lively and warm... Whatever made my wife this pleasant should not stop.” He smiled.

Very soon, Caroline was back with a steaming plate of jollof rice and chicken. She set the table before her husband.

“Aren’t you eating too?” He asked.

“No... I don’t feel hungry yet. I already took some oats before I left home earlier.”

“I see... Hmmmmm... This tasted so good!”

“Thanks dear.”

He soon finished the food and asked,

“So, what was it that made you so excited all of a sudden? You promised to gist me.”

“Yes dear. It’s good news. Let me clear the dish, I will be right back.”

“Okay oh... Be quick and let’s put an end to this suspense once and for all.”

Soon, she came back to him and settled beside him on the couch in the living room, cuddling his hands.

“Hope you no longer feel any pain now?”

“Not at all... I am much better now.”

“Thanks to God... So, when are we moving to the new location where we were transferred to?”

Victor looked at her like someone in shock.

“Honey, what did you just say?”

“Of course, you heard me darling. When are we going to the new church? When exactly are we expected to report?”

“Hehehehe! This new Caroline is amazing me! Really?”

Caroline smiled and said,

“There is nothing God cannot do.”

“Wow! Glory be to God in the highest oh!”

“Hallelujah!” She responded and they both laughed.

“So, what is the good news? I am eager to know.” He asked again.

“Oh yeah! Darling, I got a job!” She replied happily, beaming with smiles...

Victor frowned immediately and replied,

“You did what? I mean, what did you just say?”

## CHAPTER 13

“Darling, you heard me right. I just got a job.”

Caroline repeated.

Victor looked away from her and focused on the T.V without responding.

“Darling, you are not saying anything.” Caroline questioned him.

“Yes, because I think you are only cracking an expensive joke which I don’t find funny at all. Caroline, are you sure you want this marriage to work at all?”

“Darling, there you go again... How or why on earth would I work against my own marriage? You know what? You being fulfilled and happy working as a pastor is the same with me being gainfully employed. It will make me happy and fulfilled, can’t you see? A happy spouse makes a happy marriage, a frustrated one will make the home bitter. Victor, please let me... I beg you enh? In God’s name... I want to be fulfilled.” She went on her knees.

“Caroline, it's not like that... Don't ever think that I don't want your happiness or fulfilment. I insisted you should not take up a paid job because of the nature of my ministerial assignment, I may not get to stay in a location for long before being transferred... You know, and it wouldn't be healthy for us to stay apart especially when it is so far... How do you want us both to handle the temptations that will arise when we are apart? I mean, it is for our own good and the good of this marriage... You yourself can testify to one or two marriages under us at church that are having issues right now just because the husband and wife don't stay together because of their jobs... And also, considering the fact that we are even still trying to have a child of our own... We are still trusting God for children... How do you conceive when we are apart... Those are my reasons. Try to understand me... Caroline, there is a time for everything. Maybe when God answers us and you have a baby because I am sure you will carry my children... After you are done nursing them, then you can go job hunting.”

“Ha! At what age Victor? Time is not what we have. Age is not on my side. I will be thirty-three in November. For how

many years will I then have to stay at home?”

“Yes my dear. I know age is not on your side and the more reason why we have to consider this issue of childbearing as of paramount importance than the job. Medically too, the earlier for you, the better.”

Caroline went sober for some minutes and replied,

“Darling, it is God that gives children. I have waited on him for five good years... At the appointed time, I believe he will give us our own children.”

“Sure... I believe that too but my dear, stress is not also good at all for a woman trying to conceive. It's not, at all.”

“Hmmm... Victor, I have seen women who do very stressful jobs everyday, yet they get pregnant. I don't believe in all those schools of thought that stress delays conception... I believe when God is ready, ours will come, whether working or not. The fact is that, my being lonely all the time is depressing me, it may give me a high blood



pressure...”

“It won’t! God forbid... I reject it. It won't be your portion in Jesus name!” Victor replied.

There was a moment of silence before Caroline spoke again.

“You haven’t even asked me about the nature of the job, the company or its location.” She put in.

“That was because I didn’t like the idea of you working yet.” Victor answered her.

“Hmmm... Darling, it’s a miracle oh! I am to resume as the new accountant at JOANS FINANCES... With an official car and lots of other allowances and incentives. And the salary? You wouldn’t believe it! You wouldn’t just believe it!” She tilted her head to whisper into his ears. “Two hundred and fifty Thousand Naira!” She enthused.

“Really? That sounds great! Wow!” Victor replied in total

surprise.

“Yes darling. I don’t even mind if you take the whole salary from me every month, manage it the way you deem fit, and give me my own portion. I know you won’t squander it. All I just want is that you grant me this opportunity. Please!”

“Hmmmmm... Women! You? As if she can release all her money just like that. Let me hear word joor.”

Caroline laughed and replied,

“Seriously! I mean it oh!”

"You mean what? Two fifty thousand naira? Abeg..."

Caroline laughed again...

Victor sighed and reflected on the information he just heard.

Caroline fixed her gaze on him, anticipating his response.

“It is indeed a tantalizing offer. How did you hear about the job? You didn’t even carry me along when you were called

for the interview.” Victor queried.

“I am sorry about that darling. I was scared that you might not support it if I had told you... I got it through a friend.”

“Really?”

“Yes oh... He is the manager of FRAGRANCE BANK... The Fred I told you about last night. I went for the interview this morning when you were sleeping and I did excellently well. The MD was really impressed with my credentials and my performance during the interview. So, she asked me to resume work tomorrow.”

“It is well...” Victor replied with a sigh. “But you know how much I like praying about important issues like this before venturing into them which is very ideal as a child of God. I just don’t feel at ease about the whole arrangement.”

Another silence...

Caroline stared at her fingers still anxious about her

husband's final take on the matter.

“Okay... All will be well... Since it will make you happy, you can go ahead and take the job. I want you to be happy.” He finally replied.

Caroline jumped at him in excitement.

“Thank you Victor! You are a darling! I love you so-so much!” She shrieked like an excited toddler.

“I love you too. Congratulations dear. I am happy for you!” He grinned.

“Thank you darling! You know what? You just don't worry about getting to see me on weekends. I will make sure I travel down to our new location every Friday evening to be with you. It's just an hour and thirty minutes' drive from here minus traffic. That won't be a problem for me at all. I will always be in church on Sunday mornings. You can travel over here too whenever you are less busy on week days, you know... We will cope darling, we can!”

“Okay... Let’s hope so and trust God.” He replied.

“Yea... I believe everything will work together for our good... Thanks darling! You are the best! Let me leave you to rest a bit while I go fix lunch. I will make your favourite swallow dish this afternoon.” She announced with ecstasy.

“Hmmm... I hear you oh...”

They both laughed... Caroline hugged him and skipped excitedly to the kitchen to commence the cooking.

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“Rosemary, I am sorry... I am so-so sorry for everything I have put you through... See, the Andrew you know is very different from who he used to be. It is not my nature to be so over protective or jealous... Rose, please hear what I have to tell you now.” Andrew pleaded.

They had both met at an eatery near Rosemary’s office

after close of work. Rosemary looked away from him, staring at the road through the transparent glass walls.

“Andrew, I have loved you all these while... I have pleased you in virtually everything. I sacrificed a whole lot of things because of you... In short, I have been so stupid and gullible, yet all for love, I overlooked all... But now, it seems I am choked. I can't take it any longer. I feel I am a shadow of myself... I feel imprisoned... I just want to live my own life henceforth and not by anyone's dictates... I want to be 'me' for once. I am sorry, that new me can't work with you Andrew. No way! I am ready to let go of all the sacrifices and commitment to you... I believe God will compensate me. So please, let's call it off.” She replied, tears gathering in her eyes.

Andrew saw the tears and quickly brought out his handkerchief. He wiped them and held her shoulders.

“Rose, look at me. Give me one last chance to explain myself. Afterwards, you can take your decision. I want to tell you something I never told you since we met. I decided not

to tell you because I feared you might tow the same line that person followed.”

“What person? What are you talking about?” Rose asked sniffing back her tears.

“Before I met you, I met her.” He began. “She is Francisca by name... She was all I needed in a lady but because I thought I wasn’t ripe enough to handle a relationship, I kept my distance. I was 23, she was 20. It was my second year on campus, we were both workers in my fellowship back then...” He paused, a slight frown gathering on his face.

Rosemary focused on him with rapt attention. He continued.

“Somehow, we got closer in my fourth year at school, we both found ourselves in the same department at the fellowship... Then we were both made executives at the fellowship later on...”

Along the line, we started a relationship and our love began

to grow. She was my first love... I tried all my best to make her happy. I graduated a year before her and went for my youth service in one of the Northern states, Adamawa precisely, as you know. Even then, I still travelled miles just to see her.

Francisca is a very beautiful lady. She had lots of guys that wanted to date her back then but she was glued to only me, or so I thought... She also graduated and went for her youth service. At that time, I was already done with my own youth service and had gotten a job as a marketer in a furniture firm. Because of the nature of my job, I got to travel a lot of time... So, anytime I had the opportunity to travel to a place close to where she was serving, I did pay her a visit. On one of such trips, I decided to give her a surprise visit and lo and behold, I met her in her room with a guy..." He paused and sighed.

"Rosemary, do you believe she sat on the guy's laps and they were kissing each other, I mean, they were in between a deep hot romance, which would eventually lead to sex no doubt... It seemed they forgot to lock the door... I nearly



went crazy... A girl I loved with all my heart...

I left there terribly angry and disappointed... The rest is history... I was deeply hurt. Despite all my devotion and commitment to that relationship, she eventually broke my heart... We broke up in the end... She begged me several times but I shut the door of my heart to her because I know I can't cope with an unfaithful partner...

So, I vowed never to allow any lady to break my heart again. I decided to be the one always 'in charge.' That was my state of mind when I met you a year after that incidence. I decided to dominate you, to be in control of all your choices because I thought Francisca broke my heart just because I allowed her to be herself. I thought I had no grip on her...

If not for the fact that I hold God in high esteem in my heart, I would have vowed never to keep a relationship without sleeping with the lady... But God helped me to overcome the evil thought. It really pained me that despite the fact that I didn't touch Francisca, yet she was giving her body to someone else... But after I met you, God still helped me to

keep a pure courtship but the decision I made to be tough and possessive is what is affecting us now.

Please Rosemary, I am only pretending to be strong, I can't live without you. Please don't leave me... I promise to make a change. We have been through a lot together in this courtship, please don't let go now. I beg you." He pressed his palms into hers.

A few tear drops escaped from his eyes. Rosemary noticed the tears... She used her left thumb to wipe them, then stood up and went to his side. She pulled him up, and hugged him.

"Please forgive me." Andrew whispered.

"I forgive you baby." She whispered back and added "Francisca did that to you probably because that was just who she is... Your being nice to her is not a fault neither is it a reason for her misbehavior. Please I want the real you Andrew... The real person God told me you are when you proposed to me, that is who I want."

“Yes sweetheart, you have it already... Let’s have a new beginning. I promise to make it up to you. I promise never to hurt you again. Please keep the job... Do whatever pleases you... Live like who you want to be... I need you in my life Rose... These few days without you has been like hell. I love you so much and I will never let you go.”

“I love you too baby.”

A warm applause erupted from the other guests in the eatery.

“Lovely couple!”

“That’s so cute!”

”Wow! I go love oh!...” And many other expressions greeted them from different angles in the restaurant. They both smiled back at the small audience in appreciation.

## CHAPTER 14

Caroline entered the house at exactly 9:00pm. Victor was seated in the living room.

“How are you darling?” She greeted.

"You are back. Welcome dear." Victor responded, still focused on the magazine he was holding.

"I am so sorry darling, work was so hectic today plus the traffic. I will just go prepare dinner for you right away.”

“Dinner?” Victor laughed. Dinner at this time? When will that be ready? I have gotten some food to eat at the cafeteria in the street on my way home... You just go ahead and sort yourself.”

“I am sorry darling.” She apologized again and settled beside him.

“No problem... But just for the records, you said it would be an 8:00am to 5:00pm job, now I don't understand why it

took you this long.”

“I am sorry darling. I never knew it would be this time demanding... The work load is hectic.”

“Yes... That is how the offers look simple on the outside. When you get in there, everything changes. Just prepare your mind to work even on weekends some times.”

“Weekends? Nooo! I won't accept that. No job is worth putting my marriage on the line... I have just the weekends to be with you.”

“Indeed... Okay then. We shall see.”

“Prophet Victor. That your prediction won't come to pass.”

"Amen oh, for your sake and mine, let's hope it won't... So, how was your first day at work?" He asked, stroking her hair.

"It was fine... I like the work environment. My colleagues

and subordinates seem to be nice too."

"Okay, that's fine... Ermmm... I hope you remember that we will be moving this coming weekend?"

"Sure. How can I forget that?"

"Good... We have agreed to retain this house right?"

"Yea... I prefer staying here abeg... I don't need to get another house... You know, there will be days you might want to come around too. So, let's retain this one. We can renew the rent. I am used to this house already."

"It's okay... I am just thinking about the distance from here to your workplace."

"Thanks dear... I will still cope. Let me quickly shower and get something to eat, I am so famished and exhausted."

"It is well with you oh! Na you wan work. They work don find you now, no complain oh."

“Thank you man of God.” She laughed.

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“Hey sweet! How was your day?” Vivian chimed as her husband walked into the living room. He had a gloomy expression on his face.

“Fine honey and yours?” He managed to respond.

She hugged him and replied,

“Dull and boring as usual... I can’t wait to resume work.”

“Sorry about that... Is dinner ready?”

“Sure.”

“Okay... I will just go freshen up... I will join you soon.

“Alright dear... But why are you looking so dull tonight?

Anything the problem?" She asked, placing her arms on his shoulders.

"Nothing really. Maybe the stress at work plus the traffic."

"Oh! Sorry... Go and shower, I will set the table."

Soon, Alex joined Vivian and they both had dinner.

"About the dream I had..." Vivian began.

"Oh! Sorry honey. I am sorry I didn't ask you again. Yes, what was the dream all about?"

"It's such a scary dream... I saw a beautiful fair lady with long hair, coming out of a river. I was sitting beside the river, waiting for you. As soon as you appeared, the lady grabbed your hand and pushed me away. She started to drag you towards the river. I screamed in fear, shouting after you to come back. She looked back at me and laughed. She said,



"Alex is mine and as long as you choose to be with him, I will make sure you don't have joy in your union. This is just the beginning." She laughed again and pulled you away.

I screamed in fear! You followed her till both of you disappeared... I woke up very frightened and started to pray. That was when I woke you up too to join me in the prayers. Alex, we need prayers, that dream is not an ordinary one at all... It is not."

Alex ate the last morsel of his food and rested his back on the chair.

"It's indeed strange dear and scary too." He replied.

"I think we should fast and pray tomorrow." Vivian said.

"Yes we should, as a matter of fact, we must."

"Good... Another thing I am confused about was your reaction during the dream. You didn't even fight to come back to me. You followed her willingly, like you were just

helpless... Despite all my cries and my pleas... Alex, are you in a covenant with any lady before I married you?"

"Covenant? Not at all... I know I dated different girls before I met Christ but I never had a blood covenant with anyone of them.

"Hmmm... Are you very sure?"

"Of course... I mean, who still does that nonsense in this civilized age? No covenant whatsoever between me and any girl. Not at all... I am very sure about that."

"How about the numerous sex escapades. you had with them? Don't you think it's a form of covenant too?"

Alex dropped his head in his hands and sighed.

"Hmmm... We shall continue to pray about the dream. I am in Christ now, a new creature. I believe I have obtained mercy for my past sins... God will throw more light in this issue and fight for us. She is a liar! We shall have joy in this

union in Jesus name.”

“Amen... It’s alright. But can you just be sincere with me honey? Please, I want to ask you again. Why have you refused to have sex with me? Why?”

“Vivian, don’t worry. I will tell you when it is time.”

Silence...

“It’s alright then... You know, I have been thinking about this issue. I think I have made up my mind as you have left me with no option. I can’t be waking up everyday next to my husband and yet, he refuses to touch me. I am not an angel Alex. I have blood flowing in my veins... I think I should just go and stay with my mum till the time you are comfortable to do the needful. We haven’t consummated this marriage till now, so let me just excuse you for a while... The dream i had is enough proof to show that something is fishy but you choose to keep mute. Why are you so secretive like this for crying out loud?!”

“No sweetheart, please don't go... Your going to stay with her will bring up suspicions from people.” He pleaded.

“You are leaving me with no choice Alex. For how long will i be in the dark? I prayed to God to reveal whatever it is that you are hiding from me before I had that dream. So, it's obvious that you are hiding something.”

“Okay I will tell you why I haven't touched you till now... I will right away...”

“Alright then. I am listening.”

“Just promise me you won't condemn me. Promise me you will fight this battle with me and you will not leave me to be on my own.”

“Alex... You are scaring me... What battle?”

He sighed and stared at the empty plate before him.

“It all started about two years ago...”

## CHAPTER 15

“Yes, I am listening.” Vivian replied, her eyes glued to Alex in anxiety.

Alex shifted on his seat, unable to gather the courage to confess to his wife. Vivian noticed this. She held his hands and said,

“Alex, we are both in this together. We can’t give in to the devil. We must fight. I promise to stay by you...” She assured him.

“You promise?”

“Yes, I promise... I said ‘Yes I do’ to you, remember? So whatever your burden is, we bear it together. It’s our burden.”

Alex paused again then stood up and faced the wall near the dining table.

“When it first started, I thought it was just a body

dysfunction but as time went on, it seemed to be bigger than what I thought it to be... I had met you then and we were already courting...

The first thing I noticed was that each time we sat close to each other then, I would release semen in my body within just a few seconds and I would feel drained immediately, like I just finished having intercourse. If you noticed, I hardly moved close to you then, hiding under the cover that I didn't want to be tempted but the truth is, I wanted to avoid the embarrassment I felt each time that thing happened...

I realized this was an abnormal condition so I started booking appointments with different doctors. They prescribed diverse kinds of drugs for me, all to no avail... I didn't have enough courage to tell you. I kept assuring myself that I would get a cure and all would be over.

When we started planning for our wedding, my friend Arthur, referred me to a specialist doctor. He placed me on a medication for 10 days and assured me that by the time I was done, I would have been back to normal. I finished the

drugs a week to our wedding, hoping that all would be well thereafter but to my dismay, it was the same. Immediately we slept on the bed on the night of our wedding, I released on my body within a few seconds and my manhood went limp just as usual... Sincerely, I don't know what is really happening to me..."

"Oh-my-God!" Vivian exclaimed slowly in a whisper, bowing her head.

"Alex, you should have known that this is a spiritual battle. It is not something you can cure medically, otherwise you should have found a solution by now. With the dream I had, it is certain that there is more to this." She submitted.

"I agree with you hundred percent." He replied and sat down again. "So, what do we do my dear? I have been postponing having sex with you hoping that one day, my body would be back to normal but it never did till this moment." He sighed like a helpless child before his mum.

"Don't worry darling... Though I wish you had told me all these while, even before we got married so we could fight it

together, but all the same, it's never too late." She encouraged him.

"I am sorry dear. I couldn't just bring myself to telling you such."

"Sweetheart, you need to know that we are one. Don't hide things from your wife, it won't help our marriage. The Bible says, "The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." We must be naked to each other in everything, so that our consolidated effort can fight the enemy. But It's alright, I am certain that since God has revealed the secret to me, we will continue the same prayer I prayed, that God should reveal the secret of this battle to us...

I will suggest we meet with pastor and explain the challenge we have so he can join us in prayers. And also, I will suggest we embark on a seven day fasting and prayers immediately, starting from tomorrow. We can't afford to take any chances anymore."

"Sure. It's very okay by me."



“Good... Victory will be ours in Jesus name... I believe. Let’s just trust in God okay?”

“Amen...Thank you honey. Thank you so much for encouraging me. I feel relieved.” Alex smiled gratefully at her.

He gathered her into his arms and gave her a warm hug. “What would I have done without you?” He whispered.

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A day after Alex's confession, they visited their pastor after close of work that evening.

“It is an arrow, my brother.” Pastor had told them. “But with God all things are possible. Thank God you took the step to confess to you wife and you both have started the prayers already. I will also join you in the prayers and I believe by God’s grace, the enemy will be defeated. The devil will be put to shame.”

“Amen.” They both chorused.

Alex and Vivian embarked on the seven days prayer and fasting... Within that period, Vivian ensured that she woke Alex up at 12am every midnight to pray. They prayed the prayers seriously and fervently.

One night, exactly five days into their fasting, they just finished their midnight prayers and they went to sleep... Alex had a dream. He saw himself tied down in the dream. A fire was burning beside him and was about to engulf him. He was sweating heavily and terribly scared. He tried to get free from the strong ropes but he couldn't. A lady he couldn't recognize stood nearby and was laughing at him.

At a point, the fire got so close to him that it nearly touched his skin. He cried out and started praying seriously.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation, who shall I fear?  
The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?....

The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runs into it and he is saved." I run into the name of Jesus!"

Suddenly, the ropes were broken, the fire was quenched miraculously and he was free. The lady screamed loudly like someone in pain. Alex quickly stood up and looked at her and he suddenly recognized her.

"Banke!" He shouted.

The lady whimpered in pain again and disappeared.

Alex woke up sweating profusely.

"Banke!" He screamed.

Vivian woke up and quickly sat up.

"Who is Banke?" She asked a bit scared at the way her husband suddenly screamed from his sleep.

"Ha! Baaa-n-keeee!" Alex said again.

"Who is Banke? What happened to her? Did you have a dream? What was it all about?" Vivian asked him impatiently.

Alex narrated the dream to her.

"HMMMMM..." Vivian sighed and said,

"Thank you Holyspirit... So, who is Banke? She asked her husband again.

"Banke was one of my ex-s... Our relationship didn't last though. She was a very nice girl to me but I didn't really like her personality that much, I only dated her because of her body shape and beauty, so I dropped her after having numerous sexual escapades with her. She didn't want to let me go. She wanted us to get married, so she begged me a lot. She tried so much for the relationship to work but my heart wasn't with her at all. I didn't want her for a wife. I finally dumped her despite all her cries and pleas... She was heartbroken but she moved on since I refused to see

her again...

I dated other girls after her before I gave my life to Christ after which I met you... That was my past, I didn't know Christ then..." He said with regret in his eyes.

"Sweetheart, I won't judge you. We all have our pasts. I can't condemn you. Hmmmm... So, now that God has shown us the secret of this battle, we shouldn't relax yet. We must intensify our prayers. And we must ask God for mercy."

"Okay... Can we pray again?" Alex asked.

"Sure." They held hands. Vivian led the prayers.

"We are going to pray now for mercy to prevail over judgment in our lives..."

\*Every battle we are fighting now as a result of our past relationships, Father have mercy and fight for us.

\*Every sworn enemy that has determined to torture us, father in your mercy, deliver us.

\*Every hand gathered together against the peace of this union, father scatter them in Jesus mighty name.

They prayed for another one hour, using verses of the scriptures.

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## **TWO WEEKS LATER**

Alex woke up that Saturday morning and felt somehow different in his body. A feeling he never had for a long time. He held his wife, his heart beating so fast... He had the faith that God has healed him so he decided put his faith to test that morning... And God dit it! They finally consummated their marriage.

After they were done, they were so excited. It seemed to be the happiest day of their lives since they got married. They

sang praises to God and rejoiced with great joy! Alex took Vivian out later in the evening. They went to one of the finest restaurants in town and they really had a nice time.

"Our honeymoon just began," Vivian said.

"Yes oh! Thanks for fighting with me sweetheart. You are the best woman in the whole world." Alex kissed her. "I bless the day I met you." He added.

They enjoyed their marriage all the way... Alex was such a caring and wonderful husband. They did virtually everything together... He never did anything without the informing his wife, they were that close.

They loved each other so much... A lot of their church members who are single even asked God to give them a home like theirs.

Along the line, Alex relaxed in prayers. He usually give excuses of being too tired to wake up to pray...

They did everything together apart from prayers... Vivian remained fervent but along the line, she couldn't keep up with the midnight prayers again because of stress at work. They both got carried away with their career and daily activities...

Little did they know that the enemy doesn't easily give up on its prey.



## CHAPTER 16

### EIGHT MONTHS LATER...

“You are pregnant?!!!” Victor shouted at Christiana. “How? Why did you allow that to happen to you? Despite the fact that you know the implication of this to your spiritual life?”

“Excuse me Victor! Don’t even patronize me! When two people have intercourse, what does it result to? Is it not pregnancy?” Christiana fired back.

“So, what are you driving at?” Victor pursued.

“Pastor Victor! Read my lips! You own this pregnancy and I am not going for an abortion, so let it stick!” She hissed and left his office without waiting for his response.

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Christiana was a member of pastor Victor’s church... The new church he was transferred to... She was a member of the choir and she stayed not too far from Pastor Victor's house, about three streets away... She was 33 years of age

as at that time but still single.

“Jesus! I am done for!” Victor murmured. He sat back on his chair and recollected all that had happened to him within the few months that Caroline started her new job and he had moved to his new location...

At first, things were going on smoothly in the first one month of their separation. Caroline travelled to Victor’s new station on Friday nights and returned very early on Monday mornings. Like thrice, Victor visited her too during the week days and each time he did they had a nice time together. Victor kept his promise, he really adjusted. Their sexual life returned back to normal... Victor went back to the agile, romantic and caring husband that Caroline had married. She was really happy for this new change...

Trouble later started when Caroline could no longer travel on weekends. Her workload was getting unbearable. She had to work on weekends and at times even on Sunday afternoon, just as her husband had earlier predicted. At first, Victor had played along, trying to be understanding but

it got to a point that he could no longer take it again.

## **SOME MONTHS EARLIER**

“Caroline, I have done my part in sparking up the love we have for each other again.” He had blurted out during one of their phone arguments on a weekend when Caroline didn’t show up as usual.

“I have revived our sexual life, giving you all the attention you have always asked for, but now this your job is coming between us. What is happening Caroline? I am sick and tired of all these excuses. It’s been three good months, you haven’t showed up here, and you haven’t been in church! I managed to come twice but you haven’t been here since.”

“Victor, please bear with me... Sweetheart, I promise to come this weekend come what may, I must, I promise...”

“And you know I am not a good cook, I don’t like eating out either. All the foods I managed to cook were not as tasty as yours...” He sulked like a toddler.

“Ssshhhhhhh! Sweetheart, I said I am sorry okay? I promise to make it up to you. I will cook a nice delicacy next weekend and stock up the refrigerator for you and guess what? I will give you some super-hot rounds on bed that you won't recover from in a jiffy. I promise!”

“Are you sure?” Victor asked. He had softened up as he listened to her.

“Okay, I will say you said so... You have whetted my appetite already. I can't wait!”

“I will give it to you all the way you want it, any style. I will make up for those three months, trust me. I will also cook your favourite dishes.”

“Okay then...”

“Thank you darling. I have to go now.”

“Alright dear. Take care of you.” Victor replied.

“I love you sweet.”

“I love you too. The Lord be with you.”

“Amen. Thank you pastor.” She replied laughing.

Victor hung up reluctantly...

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Later that evening...

Victor was washing the dishes at his kitchen when the doorbell rang. He went to get the door.

“Oh! Sister Christiana! How are you? You didn’t tell me you would be coming. Please come in.”

“Thank you Sir. I am sorry but I have been trying your line for the past few minutes, it rang but you didn’t pick.”

“Oh! Really?” He asked checking his phone to confirm what

she said...

"Oh! That's true. It's on a silent mode. I left it here in the living room... I was doing the dishes in the kitchen. I am sorry about that."

"Ah, no problem sir. I actually came to see a friend on the next street, so as I was about going back home, I felt I should check on you."

"Oh! That's kind of you. Have your seat."

"Thanks Pastor."

"Just a minute. I will be right back."

"Okay Sir."

Soon Victor came back to the living room and switched on the TV.

"Please feel comfortable. What do I offer you?"

“Oh... Don't bother sir, my friend gave me some snacks earlier on... Thank you sir.”

“Oh... That's nice of her... You didn't go to your shop today?”

“I went there earlier today but I closed early. I just decided to come home to relax, say hi to some friends, and unwind a bit.”

“That's good. It's necessary.” Victor replied.

“How is mummy sir? Hope you do hear from her?”

“Oh Yes! We still talked today.”

“That's good... Please extend my regards to her sir.”

“Thanks my sister. I will.”

“Erm... Can I help you with the dishes Sir?”

“Oh that? Don’t bother about it.”

“No please. I really want to do this just to assist you sir.”

Victor paused a bit, then said,

“Okay then... You can... I appreciate.”

“That’s nothing sir.”

She stood up and went to the kitchen to assist Victor with the remaining dishes.



## CHAPTER 17

While Christiana was cleaning up the dishes which was certain had been used up for days because they were many, Pastor Victor showed up at the entrance of the kitchen.

“Sister Christy, please I need to go check on someone. It’s an emergency... I was just called that one of our kids at church was hospitalized and in a serious condition. Please use the spare key I put on the table in the living room when you are done. I will collect it back at church tomorrow.”

“Oh! No problem sir. You can go.”

“Thanks a bunch.” He replied and rushed out.

Christiana soon got done with the dishes... She opened the pots in the kitchen and observed that they were all empty. She opened the small freezer. No food, no fruits...

She brought out her ATM card from her wallet and quickly went to the mini market in town to get some fruits and fresh

food items to make some stew and soup for him. She stopped at her shop on her way back from the market and took some beverages and seasonings...

She got back to Pastor Victor's house and made a pot of stew with assorted meats for him... She also cooked two different kinds of soups separately. She stored some in the freezer and left part in the kitchen... She prepared some semovita and also stocked the fridge with lots of fruits. By the time she got done, it was already 9:20pm in the evening. Victor wasn't back yet, so she locked the house and went home.

Victor got back home... The aroma of the soup greeted him. He saw all that Christiana did... He opened his mouth wide open as he checked the pot of soup. His mouth watered... A message popped in on his phone. He checked the screen.

"I am sorry that I didn't ask for permission before I did it sir. It's my own little way of assisting mummy. I noticed there was no food and you might come back home famished.

Please accept it Sir. You will find two wraps of semovita in the small cooler on top of the shelf - Christiana.”

Pastor Victor at first wasn't comfortable with the whole arrangement. He felt somehow about it but just when he remembered the inviting pot of soup, he couldn't resist it any longer. He flung the bread he had bought on his way home on the kitchen table. He opened the pot, scooped some soup into a plate and devoured the food immediately. He wanted to get some cold water in the refrigerator when he noticed Christy had stocked it up with soup and different kinds of fruits too.

“How much did this lady spend today? My God!”

He picked up his phone and sent a message of appreciation.

“I really appreciate all that you did. God bless you real good. Thank you so much!”

He took a cup of cold water and settled on the couch in the living room with a great sense of satisfaction.

“It’s been long I ate a good homemade meal like this.” He smiled.

The following day at church, pastor Victor thanked Christiana for her help the previous day but he forgot to collect back his house key from her.

The next Saturday, pastor Victor was on a phone call with his wife, Caroline... Christiana came around and was about to knock on his door when she heard his voice.

“Caroline, don’t give me that story. You whet my appetite already, now you are telling me this? What the hell is wrong with you? I don't expect this. You should be here by now... I am human for crying out loud and I need you beside me. You shouldn’t be doing this to me.”

“Baby I am sorry. It’s beyond my control... The MD didn’t even inform me of the trip before now. I just got his message yesterday morning that we will be travelling for a conference.”

“You and him? Why you of all people? I hope he is not trying

to play some games?”

“Oh! Victor darling, don’t have any dirty thoughts okay? He is not that kind of person.”

There was silence...

“Are you still there darling? Hello!” Caroline said.

“See I don’t like all this. I don’t... That is why I didn’t want you to work in the first place. Caroline you are quitting that job period!” He said angrily and ended the call.

Christiana waited for about two minutes before knocking on the door so that Victor wouldn’t suspect that she had been eavesdropping on his conversation with Caroline.

She knocked on the door and Victor replied,

“Yes? Who is it?”

“It’s me Sir... Christiana” She answered with a low voice.

Victor opened and she entered.

“Good evening Sir.”

“Good evening my sister. How are you doing? Please come in.”

“I am fine sir and you?” She replied, taking a seat.

“I am good too... Thanks so much for your kind gesture last week... I really appreciate it. My God will bless you and replenish your pocket.”

“Amen in Jesus name. Thanks you sir. Please don't mention... All for God Sir... Ermmmmm... You forgot to collect your spare key on Sunday Sir.

"Oh really?"

“Yes sir... So I brought it because I might forget to bring it to church tomorrow.”

“That’s kind of you.”

She hadn’t brought out the key out of her bag yet when Pastor Victor stood up and said.

“Let me get you a drink. I will be right back.”

“Don’t bother pastor. I am very much okay.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes Sir... Besides the key is the first reason that brought me here Sir. The second reason is that I need your prayer over a very urgent issue sir.”

“Really?” Victor asked taking a seat opposite her. He noticed that she sat down carelessly, her skirt revealing her under pant but he carefully shifted his gaze to her face in order to avoid the temptation.

“Pastor, there is this painful lump in my breast. I have visited the doctor, they have prescribed drugs, yet it remained. I am so scared because some people say it

leads to cancer of the breast.”

She stood up quickly and knelt before him. She brought out the upper part of her left breast before Victor could protest.

“See it sir...” She continued, pretending not to notice the effect her action was having on Victor.

“Please sit down.” He managed to say.

“Let me remain like this sir. I need you to pray on it, the pain is getting unbearable.”

Victor stole a glance at the fair succulent breast. He already got the message... Christy was only trying to seduce him.... Truly, he had been sex starved for a while now. He laid his hand on the breast as if he wanted to pray on it. As he was about to start the prayers, he felt a strong touch on his manhood. Christiana had gotten hold of him and that was it. They had intercourse right there in the living room...



Since that day, Christiana came to pastor Victor's house whenever she felt like... She already had the keys... Victor wept with full remorse after their first intercourse but each time Christy came around, he lacked the courage to drive her away. Each time he made up his mind to pursue her, he found himself going deeper and deeper with her. It seemed Christiana had all the keys to his weak points. She gave him rounds of intercourse regularly till Victor stopped longing for Caroline to come home.

Caroline on the other hand noticed that Victor no longer disturbed her about travelling home for the weekends and she concluded that he had probably gotten used to her new schedule. She came around only once in a month and to her all was well... It's been eight months and now Christiana is pregnant for her husband.

## CHAPTER 18

Victor couldn't sleep... He turned in bed for what seemed a million times...

When he couldn't fight the thoughts any longer, he rose up from the bed and began to pace his bedroom. It was half past two in the midnight...

Everything that happened seemed like a dream to him...

"How I wish this is a dream and I wake up thanking God... How I wish I can undo this mistake of mine... Oh my God! How do I face Caroline to tell her that I impregnated a lady within this short period? A church member at that?! The same Christiana that she usually give counsel to... Victor, you are done for... Your ministry is gone... No more hope for you... Why would you give in to the devil? Ha! I am finished... He soliloquized and crashed on his bed with his face down, weeping bitterly.

"God have mercy on me! I have desecrated your altar, I have defiled the holy place in my selfishness and

carelessness...

What a pity! How are the mighty fallen! If I had visited Caroline that very weekend that Christiana seduced me... Only if I had delegated the Sunday sermon to one of the deacons and I had travelled to her place, this wouldn't have happened, at least, I would have saved my marriage. Now my ministry is ruined! Jesus have mercy... I have been zealous and have been on fire for you Lord, but I have been stupid... I have allowed the fleshy desires in me to consume me... I thought I could control it... I am busy and fervent in pastoring your church but I am careless in managing my home... I have caused trouble in my marriage with my own hands... Forgive me Jesus! Have mercy on me!" He wept bitterly like a baby.

The next day which was Saturday was to be Rosemary and Andrew's wedding ceremony at the bride's hometown but Victor couldn't attend the wedding... He was indoor all through, drowned in depression...

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Vivian struggled to get out of bed that morning. She felt so weak up to her limbs. She was eight months pregnant and gradually drawing near to her delivery date. She recalled again the events of the past months...

After Alex was delivered and he started performing his bedroom activities normally, she got pregnant a month later and their sexual life had been normal...

Though Alex wasn't as fervent as before in prayers, Vivian tried her best to keep the fire burning, but most times she got so tired that she slept off, courtesy of her condition...

That very morning, she remembered what Pastor had told them both after Alex was delivered.

“At the point of victory, the devil is not happy, he re-strategizes on how to get back into the lives of his victims... Be prayerful and vigilant...”

“Is that what is happening right now?” Vivian asked herself

as she remembered pastor's counsel.

For some weeks now, Alex has changed from the husband she used to know. At first, she thought it was the stress of his job taking its toll on him, but later on she knew there was more to it... Alex became a very dry and aggressive husband. Each time she challenged him for being so, he just ignored her and left the home, either to go to work or visit his friends...

She checked the time, it was 8:30am. She had stopped working when the pregnancy got so challenging for her.

"He must have left for work without informing me as usual." She murmured as she struggled to get up from the bed.

"Lord, please touch my husband and take control of my home." She prayed.

She dragged herself to the kitchen to get some water... She decided to call mama, her mum in-law...

Her mother in law has been there for her... She is a mother indeed. In short, Vivian loved her just like her own mum... She dialed her number.

“Hello, mama how are you?”

“I am fine my daughter.”

“Good morning ma.”

“Morning my dear. How is your husband?”

“He is fine ma... He has gone to work.”

“Okay... It is well with you my dear. I hope you do take all your routine drugs well? And your antenatal appointments, I hope you don't skip them?”

“Yes mama... I...”

“Make sure you take lots and lots of rest oh! Don't stress yourself at all. And the herbal solution I recommended too,

take it at least once a day, eat a lot of fruits...”

Vivian rolled her eyes tiredly as her mother in law gave out her seemingly endless instructions in her usual manner.

“Sorry my dear. The labour will be short and sweet, both you and the baby are preserved in Jesus name...”

“Amen mama. Ha, Maaa-maaa! Someone that doesn’t have enough airtime on her phone cannot call you.”

“Thank God you know that... I will always say everything I want to say, no need to remain am for my belle. If airtime finishes, I will call back...”

Vivian laughed. Alex’s mother has a way of bringing her out of her dark moods.

“Mama, I called you for something very important ma. I feel I should let you know...”

“What happened? How is the baby?” She interrupted her

in fear.

“Mama the baby is fine. No problem at all... I just want to seek counsel from you. It’s about Alex... Alex has changed of late...”

“Really? What did he do?”

“Mama, Alex comes home late every night now which is quite very very unusual of him. He has started spending time with friends till late in the night. He is no more the caring, gentle and understanding man I used to know... Mama, my husband has changed... He doesn't talk to me again... He gets easily provoked each time I confront him about his late night movements... In fact, he nearly hit me last night...”

“Jesus! Was he drunk ?” Mama asked in disbelief.

“He wasn’t mama. Alex does not drink. He only comes home late... Mama, please talk to him... I feel so lonely these days... He sleeps off immediately he gets home at



night and leaves very early even before I wake up from bed. We barely talk... Each time I called him during the day, he doesn't pick up, claiming he is busy. Mama, I'm losing my mind, what could have happened to my husband?" She cried.

"Jesus Christ! What kind of a man in his right senses abandon a heavily pregnant woman? Talk more of trying to hit her? What has come over my son? See enh? Vivian don't worry... Tomorrow is Saturday right?"

"Yes mama."

"Very good... I will arrive at your house latest by noon, by God's grace. I will make sure I leave here very early."

"Thank you ma. I hope I am not bothering you mama?"

"Bother ke? Alex is my son, I must ensure he doesn't fail in his marriage. Don't worry at all. You just put your mind at rest oh! Please, don't think about it at all. You know high B.P. is not good for your condition, enh-enh... So just relax.

God will take control... what should I bring for you people? Do you still have palm oil? Crayfish and dried fish nko? Or snails?"

"Mama... Don't bother carrying load, we have them here."

"It's a lie. That's how you said last time... Don't worry, I will carry the load. Shebi is my hand..."

"Mama, I am so grateful... You are a mother indeed to me...What would I have done without you? Thank you so much."

"Don't mention my dear... You just don't tell him you called or told me anything oh. I will find out the reason for his misbehavior myself by the time I come around. He is my son, I know how to arrest him in his wrong doings."

"Okay mama... Safe journey ma."

"Thank you my daughter. Take care... See you soon."

Vivian sighed with relief... She felt comforted after her mum inlaw assured her that all would be well...

Soon, it was evening... Alex came back home with a very big surprise that shook the entire being of his wife.

## CHAPTER 19

Alex entered the house that evening very late as usual but this time around, he didn't come alone, he came with a lady. The lady had a small luggage with her.

"Welcome dear, how was your day?" Vivian greeted him.

She looked at the female guest and gave her husband the 'who is she?' look.

Alex said,

"Lilian, here is my wife Vivian... Vivian, meet Lilian, my friend and colleague... She will be staying with us henceforth." He added after the introduction.

The words sounded like a bombshell to Vivian. She looked at Alex again.

"Like? I am not getting you honey... You mean she will stay here with us? Till when?"

"I said henceforth... She is not leaving anymore!" He barked at her and turned to Lilian, "Let me help you with the bag baby."

"As who?" Vivian asked in a shaky voice.

"Oh! You really want to know?" Alex asked.

"Oh yes Alex! I deserve to know why you brought a sudden guest into our matrimonial home without my consent, a female adult at that!"

"Okay then, if you insist, I will tell you. Meet Lilian, my girlfriend. She presently has issues with her house rent, so she will be staying with us henceforth... I wanted to save you from the heartache before but it's like you don't want that."

Vivian looked dumbfounded as if trying to process the information she just heard. Alex pulled Lilian towards the bedroom. Vivian jerked back from her shock as she noticed that Alex was leading Lilian to their matrimonial bedroom.

"And where are you taking her to?" She shouted after them.

"Are you blind? To the bedroom of course!" Alex replied calmly.

"Our bedroom? You mean this lady will sleep on our matrimonial bed?" Vivian nearly screamed.

Lilian eyed her angrily and Alex replied,

"Yes, do you have a problem with that?"

"Alex! Where are you? This is not the Alex I married... No, this is not my husband!"

"What's she saying?" Alex asked Lilian. They both laughed at Vivian and then entered the room. Vivian followed them and barged into the room.

"Vivian, if not for your condition, I should have given you a serious beating. Did I ask you to come in? Have you lost

your manners? You should knock before entering a room!" Alex shouted at her immediately she entered the bedroom.

"Me? Knock before entering our room? Oh! Now I understand." She turned to Lilian,

"You, whatever you have done to my husband will be undone soon, I mean very soon. I serve a living God!" She cried.

"My friend get out!" Alex shouted again and shut the door after she left.

"Baby, I am sorry about all that just happened, please feel comfortable while I go get some refreshments for you."

"Okay baby... I wouldn't mind a cup of cold juice please."

"No problem... At your service!" He smiled pecking her cheek. "I will be right back."

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"Mama, pick this call!" Vivian whimpered in tears as she dialed her mother in law's number for the umpteenth time but she didn't pick up the call... She lied down tiredly on the bed in the visitor's room where she was forced to retire in after Alex pushed her out of their bedroom. She felt a pull in her tommy... She adjusted her lying position.

"God please, intervene in my marriage! Save my home from crumbling. God help me! Something is wrong with my husband, Lord do something!" She cried.

She felt the pull again... "Oh! Baby, you are hurting mummy." She whispered.

Her phone rang... It was her mum in law.

"Oh thank God!" She shrieked.

"Mama! My home is on fire!" She nearly screamed into her phone.

"God forbid! I reject it in Jesus name. What really happened?

Where is Alex?"



"Mama, Alex brought his girlfriend tonight... He said she will be staying with us henceforth... He even asked me to leave our bedroom for them. I am presently in the visitor's room as we speak... Mama, this is not ordinary." She cried.

"Wait Vivian, girlfriend? How? How come? When did Alex become like this?"

"Mama, I am finished! Vivian wept.

"Henh-hen! Stop saying negative things to yourself. That's what I don't want." Her mother in law cautioned her. "You are not finished... Whoever that girl is will go back to wherever she came from. She can't take your home... Wipe your tears my daughter. God will fight this battle for you... Are you still there?"

"I am with you oh mama."

"Good... Listen to me. Your condition now is the most important issue here. Make sure you don't brood over the

matter. Instead of thinking, begin to pray. Are you hearing me?"

"Yes mama... Hmmmm... Alex even threatened to beat me up, mama what is happening? Everything is like a terrible nightmare... Is there still hope for my marriage?"

"Sssshhhhhh... Stop the lamentations... There is hope for your marriage... Even if the hope seems not to be in sight, your marriage will stand. Hold on to God and have faith okay?"

"Yes mama."

"Alright, I will reach your place by God's grace, before noon tomorrow. Just avoid him as much as possible for now. Don't argue with him okay. Don't even ask him questions till I come. Do you understand me?"

"Yes mama... Thank you so much ma. I appreciate you."

"It is well my daughter, I will be praying for you here... Jesus

will take control."

After mama had dropped the call, Vivian called their pastor, she explained all that happened that night to him.

"Sister Vivian, remember what I told you after we fasted and prayed about Bro Alex's condition months back... The enemy doesn't surrender easily... That dream you had about that lady is coming to pass now... So, I want you to stand firm and intensify your prayers... Victory will be yours in Jesus name... Don't panic, remember your condition... Just relax and don't forget God's word in Psalm 46:10 that says: "Be still and know that I am God." Jesus is in the boat of your marriage sister Vivian, it can never sink... You just be calm. The storm is raging but Jesus will calm it."

"Thank you pastor, I really appreciate you sir."

Vivian picked up her Bible after she got through with pastor on phone and started to pray fervently for about an hour before she slept off.

\*\*\*\*\*

Christiana knocked at Pastor Victor's door at around 8:45am... She knocked for a long time, but there was no response... She dialed his number, it rang but he didn't pick it. She became persistent with the knocking till Victor woke up.

"Today is Saturday." He murmured as he opened his heavy eyes.

"I don't have an appointment with anyone, who could that be?" He thought.

He dragged himself out of bed, a dull headache clung to his forehead. He had wept a lot in the night, he didn't sleep until the early hours of the morning...

"I am coming!" He managed to reply so that whoever it was would stop knocking. He entered the bathroom and washed his face before he went to get the door...

"Christiana!" He gasped as he opened the door.

He wanted to shut back the door but Christiana was smarter. She got hold of the handle of the door and flung it open. She entered the living room and sat comfortably in one of the chairs.

"What are you doing in my house?" Victor challenged her trying to suppress his anger.

"Oh really? Because of the pregnancy now, my presence is no more welcome here right? When I was giving you pleasure, you didn't chase me. Hmmmmm... Men! You all are the same... I thought a pastor, a man of God would be different."

"Shut up!" Victor shouted at her.

She eyed him disdainfully and hissed.

"Now listen to me!" Victor continued. "When you are done, you leave my house!" He commanded and went to back to the bedroom, shutting the door behind him.

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Vivian just woke up... It was some minutes to 9:00am... Someone was knocking on the door of the visitor's room where she had slept the previous night. She looked around her... It took her a few seconds to remember where she was. "Oh! The guest room." She thought. Everything came rushing down her memory... She remembered that she had prayed for a long time before dozing off... She struggled to get out of bed, wondering who it was. She opened the door... It was Lilian.

"What do you want?!" She nearly screamed at her.

Lilian brushed her aside and entered the room.

"Get out of my room now!" Vivian ordered her, breathing heavily.

"Hey! Relax... Remember your condition doesn't want this."

Lilian replied.

"Don't pretend to me that you care. Now, out of my room!"

"Well, let's thank God that you quickly got used to calling this place your room, because you will be staying here henceforth."

"I reject it in Jesus name. You are the intruder here, you will leave my house for me."

"Hahahahaha!" Lilian laughed. "Babe, it's better you wake up on time and face the reality, your husband is now mine!"

"Oh! It's a good thing that you said "my husband." Oh yes, he is my husband. He wedded me legally and in church, you are the intruder here." She replied her, flashing her wedding rings before her face.

"Vivian!" Lilian called her with all seriousness. "You can't know peace in this home until you finally leave. So, let that sink!" She said on a final note and left her room.

"I reject it in Jesus name! It is not my portion!" Vivian shouted after her.

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Vivian woke up! It was all a dream... The last statement of Lilian in that dream brought back the very scene of the dream she had about nine months back when she just got married.

"Ha! Is it that my dream is just coming to pass? No! Lilian, you are a liar! The devil has failed over my marriage!"

She picked up her Bible, and switched to a prayer mode. She managed to get up from the bed as she was getting heavier by the day. As she began to pray, someone knocked on the door. Her heart nearly stopped.

"Who is it?" She asked in fear, thinking the dream she just had was about to come to pass.

"My friend, open this door for me!" Alex shouted at her.



## **AT ROSEMARY'S HOMETOWN**

"Do you take Rosemary as your lawfully wedded wife, to love and to hold, to cherish her for better for worse, in sickness and in health... Till death do you part?"

"Yes I do!" Andrew replied beaming with smiles as he fixed his eyes on her bride... Marrying Rosemary was a dream come true for him...

Soon they got through with the exchange of vows, and then came the thanksgiving... It was the happiest day of Rosemary's life. She kept smiling, her heart full of joy. She looked so beautiful in her flowing white gown and she danced with so much ecstasy. They got wedded in a church at Rosemary's parents' hometown...

While they proceeded to leave the church after the wedding program, Rosemary whispered to Andrew,

"I haven't seen pastor Victor today, have you?"

"No I haven't too... I wonder why he hasn't arrived yet... He

is probably on his way."

"Maybe." She replied.

\*\*\*\*\*

Victor came back to his living room about an hour later and saw Christiana still seated comfortably.

"Leave my house now!" He ordered her in a calm manner.

"Man of God, I am going nowhere until you tell me what you have decided concerning this pregnancy." She hissed and resumed the game she was playing on her mobile phone.

"Christiana, were you sent to destroy my ministry? It is obvious that you are on a mission... Yes, I had intercourse with you as a result of my carelessness, my sex hormones were on the rush that day because I was expecting my wife before she later called that she couldn't make it... You came later that day and seduced me till I fell and since then you never stopped coming..."

Christiana's face was glued to her phone. She ignored Victor all through his lamentations. Victor continued.

"I should have been more careful... I allowed the flesh to get hold of me... I really doubt you are a child of God that you claim to be because you had never for once felt any iota of remorse all the way... Now, listen and listen good, I love my wife so much and I will never allow a whore like you to ruin my marriage. No! It can never happen. So, I will advise you to take that thing you are carrying to whoever is responsible for it and leave my life forever!"

"Hahahaha!" Christiana laughed. "Just like that? Yeye dey smell... All those things you just said, are all stories for the gods... You love your wife indeed, yet you cheat on her. Love indeed!"

"Who are you to judge me? Leave my house now!"

"I am going nowhere!" She shot back angrily.

The door to the living room suddenly opened. Caroline walked in calmly with her luggage. Both Victor and Christiana were so surprised to see her, especially Victor. Caroline never came around without informing him ahead...

There was a perfect silence.

Christiana was still on her seat eyeing Caroline disgustingly... She hissed at her...

Caroline smiled and said,

"You heard what my husband said Christy, now leave!" She ordered her calmly but Christiana remained seated unmoved by her words.

Caroline repeated her statement this time, raising her voice a bit.

"Leave now! Leave my house before I call the police you intruder!"

Victor thought he was in a dream. "Caroline asked Christiana to leave? Has she heard everything and yet remained this calm? The Caroline I know can never be this calm..." His thoughts were interrupted by Christiana's voice.

"Madam, I am going nowhere. I am pregnant for your husband."

"Yes? So, what's the big deal? You getting pregnant for him doesn't make you his wife automatically. I am still his wife and I love my husband. This is my home, my territory, you are an intruder... I know your type, home wrecker, that is what you are! Now, listen! When you have the baby, we can take him or her in after we would have confirmed that the child is truly ours... Now, leave!" Caroline ordered her, pointing at the exit door.

Christiana was thrown off balance... She wasn't expecting such a reaction from Mrs Thomas after she heard that she was pregnant... She picked up her bag angrily and left the house. Caroline followed and shut the door after her.

## CHAPTER 20

Victor prostrated flat on the floor before Caroline after she had shut the door. He couldn't look at her in the face. He felt sure that trouble was imminent... He spoke while still lying prostrate before her...

"Caroline, I beg you, please forgive me." He pleaded, still avoiding her face. "It was a terrible mistake borne out of my carelessness and I regret it already... Please, I love you, it is you I love... It was my carelessness that led me into this mess, please pardon me..."

"Ssshhhhh..." Caroline interrupted him. She knelt before him and raised him up to a kneeling position with her... She placed a finger on his lips.

"I heard everything... Every bit of your conversation with her." She said.

"You did?"

"Yes I did... Please don't say anything again sweetheart, I

caused it all... If I had been home frequently, this wouldn't have happened to us... I forgive you with all my heart Victor and I am so sorry for all that I have put you through."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes sweetheart, I am back home to make my marriage work... I resigned!" She replied calmly.

Her statement struck Victor.

"You did what?!" He asked in astonishment.

Caroline smiled. "Yes, you heard me right... I resigned..."

She rose up and sat on the couch, pulling Victor with her. After they both had settled down, she continued.

"For a while now, I lost my peace concerning the job. I kept having this feeling to be with you and take my place in the ministry... Two weeks ago, I had a dream about you... I saw you trapped inside a burning house. I was outside, I couldn't

help you. I woke up and I didn't know the meaning of that dream but I prayed about it... After praying, I totally lost my peace about my job... Each day I spent at work afterwards, I felt terrible. My mind was constantly drawn to you and the work of the ministry. I had a constant feeling of being in a wrong place...

So, I made up my mind to resign... I tendered my resignation letter two days back and I felt a strong inner peace after I did... Immediately I got to the entrance of the house this morning and I listened to your conversation with Christiana, a voice within me said,

"That is the fire that is about to engulf your husband. He is trapped in it. Go and rescue him!" That was how it all happened."

"Oh father, thank you for not giving up on me." Victor wept.

"It's okay sweetheart." Caroline drew her husband to her bosom. I love you Victor... Without my career, I was fine but without you, I had no peace... I am back to make things



right. I love you above my career and I am ready to sacrifice everything and give you all my support... If not for God, I nearly lost my marriage... I am fully back for you and for God. I surrender totally to Him... We will fight this together. Your mistake is my mistake. We are in the ministry together... I am so sorry for all I caused you, I'm sorry for everything..."

"Ha! This is a miracle... Thank you Jesus." Victor went on his knees again, thanking God.

Caroline's words pulled him out of his depression and gave him a renewed hope over Christiana's case. He stood up and hugged his wife.

"I love you so much honey... I appreciate you for standing by me in this trying period... Thank you for believing in me." He whispered.

"I love you too baby." Caroline whispered softly.

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Vivian opened the door of the visitor's room slowly. It was her husband, Alex.

"So, you don't know that breakfast should be ready by now, and we have a guest for that matter."

Vivian's first instinct was to say, "What stupid guest?" But she remembered her mother in law's warning and kept calm.

"I give you fifteen, maximum twenty minutes to fix breakfast, else you will be in trouble." Alex warned and left.

Vivian looked at her husband as he walked away, tears flowing down her face.

"God, please break the chains or whatever has tied down my husband." She prayed.

She dragged herself to the kitchen to make breakfast... She felt a strong pull under her tommy and felt like lying down

again but when she remembered her husband's warning, she managed to make some fried eggs and set the table for Alex and Lilian. She was placing the slices of bread on the plates when they both came out of the bedroom laughing heartily like lovebirds. Vivian was hurt but she maintained her calm. They settled down to eat.

"So, you can't greet?" Alex asked Vivian.

"Greet who?" Vivian asked.

"Lilian of course, are you blind?"

Vivian ground her teeth in anger but she managed to keep calm. She replied,

"Good morning Lilian."

Lilian snubbed her. She refused to answer her greeting.

"Don't worry sweetheart, you will soon get used to her."

Alex told Lilian and they continued their meal.

Vivian went back to her room. She sat helplessly on her bed, weeping.

"Alex didn't even asked if I have eaten... God, despite all the prayers I prayed in the night. What kind of storm is this? Please Lord answer me speedily... I'm going crazy already..."

A knock on her door interrupted her prayers. She quickly wiped her tears and went to open the door. It was Lilian.

"Get us some juice." She ordered and turned to leave without waiting for a reply.

"Lilian!" Vivian called. "You are a woman like me and you see my condition like this, yet you choose to stress me. What does it cost you to get the juice yourself? What pleasure do you have in destroying another woman's home? Listen to me, the Lord will give me victory in this battle and you will lose your hold over my husband soon... I know you are an agent of the devil but I am a child of God. The Lord

will fight for me!"

Lilian moved close to her and gave her a slap in her face.

"How dare you talk to me like that? Are you mad?"

Vivian screamed... She was about to retaliate when Alex came around. He held back her hand, then slapped her on the other cheek. Vivian screamed in horror, her mouth wide open, tears running down her face.

"You want to slap her? What guts have you?" Alex asked fuming with anger.

He held Lilian and they both went back to the dining table. Lilian looked back at Vivian and pulled out her tongue in mockery. Vivian followed them to the dining table.

"Alex, you slapped me because of this lady? You don't even care that I am carrying your baby?"

Alex hissed. He stood up and said to Lilian,

"Let's go. We need to leave the house for this idiot. Out of my way!" He shouted at Vivian.

"And what if I don't?" Vivian asked angrily.

Alex pushed her and she fell, hitting her tommy hard against the wall. They both left the house without looking at her.

"Alex!" She whispered in pain. Her water broke and she collapsed on the floor.

The pain became excruciating... After some minutes, there was a knock on the door...

Pastor and his wife entered and found Vivian lying almost lifeless on the floor. Vivian saw pastor and his wife trying to pull her up before she passed out.

## CHAPTER 21

Vivian opened her eyes...

She felt pains all over her body. Her mother in law was sitting beside her bed.

"Mama, what happened?"

Her mum in law smiled at her.

"Congratulations my daughter, you just had a baby girl!"

"Baby?" She touched her tommy and she noticed it had come down a little... She looked at mama.

"Yes, Vivian... You have delivered a baby girl... I was on my way to your place when your pastor called me to meet him at this hospital because Alex refused to show up when they were bringing you... They saw my number on your mobile phone I guess... You were brought in unconscious after your water broke, so the doctor quickly brought out the baby in order to save her. I thank God you are alive." Mama smiled joyfully.

Vivian remembered all that happened immediately.

"Where is Alex?"

"My daughter, just leave Alex alone for now please, okay? Don't bother your head, he will soon come to check on you."

"Mama, Alex and her girlfriend slapped me hard on both cheeks." Vivian cried.

"Ssshhhh... Don't let that spoil your joy... You know I promised you your marriage will work by God's grace. Alex will come back to his senses. Except if I don't serve a living God. Let us rejoice over the gift of this new baby. The fact that you are even still alive is enough to overlook every other thing for now and begin to praise God... Let me bring your baby for you."

Mama stood up and brought the beautiful baby girl to Vivian. Her face lightened up as she saw her princess.



"God is great, she is so beautiful, just like her mum!" Mama said.

Vivian sat up and carried the baby in her arms... She smiled... Her heart melted with so much love for her.

"I love you my angel" She said, tears of joy wetting her eyes...

After some minutes, she returned the baby to mama and said,

"I feel some pains all over my body mama, please hold her, I need to rest."

"Yes my dear, it's normal. Sorry, you will soon get better." Mama replied, taking the baby from her.

"Congratulations grandma!" Vivian smiled weakly as she laid back on the bed.

"You are just like my real mum. Thank you for taking me like your own daughter... What would I have done without you mama?"

"Let's thank God my dear... And that reminds me, your mum was here with me earlier. She just left here some minutes back to get some of the drugs that the doctor prescribed for you."

"Oh! I see..." She replied and closed her eyes.

\*\*\*\*\*

Victor and Caroline both went before the congregation to confess the sin of adultery that Victor committed with Christiana. The whole church was dumbfounded after the confession... One could hear the sound of a pin if it had dropped... The silence was thick... Caroline collected the microphone from Victor and said,

"I apologize to the whole church for not being there for my husband... I left him alone to 'burn' most times just because I wanted to pursue my career... If I had stayed back this wouldn't have happened... I appeal to you all my dear sisters, please never abandon your home because of your job, I nearly lost my marriage but for the grace of God... We

pray for forgiveness and we trust God that He will help us and restore all that has been lost in our moments of carelessness... I have resigned from my job in order to support my husband in the work of the ministry..."

"Awww... Awwwww..." The congregation murmured in empathy for the couple...

The way Caroline stood beside her husband to bear his faults with him really melted their hearts. Some of them started stretching their necks to see if Christiana was in church but she wasn't... She wasn't ready to face the church to confess her sins.

When Victor told her about his intention to go before the church, he advised her to do likewise but Christiana couldn't bring herself to do that. She had felt deflated and defeated with the way Caroline handled the whole issue...

After the confession, Pastor Victor was suspended while someone else took over the pastoring of the church immediately, but Victor and Caroline remained in that

church just like ordinary members... For Victor, the shame was much but Caroline stood by him all through, giving him courage. They both bore the disciplinary process in humility of heart.

Some months later, Pastor Victor was reinstated and transferred to another congregation in the Northern part of the country.

"North!" He had exclaimed with bulging eyes when he received the letter of Pardon, Reinstatement and Transfer sent from the church headquarter.

"Yes baby." Caroline answered after going through the letter. "Do you have a problem with that? At least, you don't have issues with how to see your wife on weekends again... We are going together, we are doing ministry together... The Lord will go with us, we are not alone. You have my support all the way darling. Congratulations on your reinstatement." She smiled broadly at him and hugged him. "I'll be there all the way with you Pastor Victor."

Victor laughed loud. His joy was immeasurable.

"Thank you honey. I bless the day I met you... Thank you for staying firmly beside me even when I strayed, how do I repay you?"

"I am doing it for us baby. You don't need to repay me. Thank God we both came out of it, strong and victorious!"

Victor swept her off her feet in ecstasy and swirled round like a father carrying a toddler.

"I love you so much honey!" He kissed her.

"I love you more dear!"

"Let's go and play on the bed."

"I am not in the mood!" Caroline replied laughing.

"You and who? Let's go joor..."

He carried her in his firm hands and marched to their bedroom in anticipated excitement.

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The next month, Christiana delivered a baby boy. They named him Daniel... There was no need for a DNA test after all because the baby looked exactly like Victor. The resemblance was striking...

Christiana later went for confession at church too... She also apologized to both Caroline and Victor and sought for their forgiveness. She confessed to the couple that she actually wanted to take advantage of the fact that Caroline didn't have a child for Pastor Victor, so she could seize the opportunity to take her place...

Caroline wept a lot during Christiana's confession while Victor consoled her.

"I forgive you Christiana... If God can, then who am I?"  
Caroline surrendered.

Christiana weaned Daniel when he turned a year and six months old after which Victor and Caroline adopted him.

Daniel automatically became their first child. They took him with them to the North.

## CHAPTER 22

Vivian was discharged from the hospital with her baby two days later. Alex never showed up at the Hospital. He even refused to pick his mum's calls after which he switched off his phones.

"Don't worry my dear. You can move in with me till everything has been settled... I don't want you to go back to that house while Alex is still under the influence of that lady... I am sure he has been hypnotized but I trust the God I serve, my son will be free " Mama told Vivian.

"Mama... How can I leave my husband's house while I'm still married to him. Let me go back home, at least, he should see his baby."

"I understand you Vivian. I know how you feel but I don't have a release in my spirit concerning your decision. Something may go wrong... Your safety and that of the baby is important. Don't worry. We will engage in warfare prayers together till victory is ours... I didn't tell you before but I'll tell you now. Alex told me this morning before coming



down to the hospital that he doesn't want to see me in his house again, neither you or the baby... Hmmmm, that girl Lilian, she will soon realize that she had chosen the wrong path. I'm a praying woman. No one messes up with my child and go scot free. Vivian, let us go. Trust me, you will be fine."

"What?! Mama why? What have I done?" She wept.

"Nothing my dear... It's a phase in your marriage. It will pass."

"Mama... Is there still hope for my marriage? That lady has captured Alex's heart completely... My husband said she doesn't want to see me and even his child! God!" Vivian wept uncontrollably.

"Vivian, don't talk like an unbeliever. There is always hope for a child of God, no matter how terrible the situation is. I see hope when I look at Jesus. As long as my God lives, my hope is alive and I want you to have this same mind. Vivian, it will end in praise. I can even hear the whispers of hope

already. Victory is near. Can't you hear?" Mama said smiling at her.

Vivian managed a smile...

"Thank you Grandma. I love you."

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Vivian agreed to follow her mum in law. She moved in with her... They named the baby Zion, the name Alex and Vivian had agreed on before she gave birth...

After six months, Alex never showed up. One year passed, yet no sign of Alex but Vivian never gave up. Her mum inlaw kept encouraging her all the way.

Vivian's mum called her one day and said,

"My daughter, are you sure Alex is still interested in this marriage? You are still young and I don't want you to waste your time. I want the best for you."

"Mom, the Lord is with me. My Redeemer liveth, He can't leave me at this point... You always taught me to fight mom. Are you discouraged? Alex is still my husband and I am very sure that one day, he will come back to me. I'm hopeful."

"Hmmmmm... That is good Vivian. I love your faith. I will be with you in prayers. All will be well... My regards to my baby Zion and mama."

## **TWO YEARS LATER**

Alex suddenly walked into his mum's house. He saw a little girl sleeping on the sofa. Vivian came out of the bedroom and was very surprised to see him all of a sudden. He looked so rough and unkempt.

"What are you doing here? How did you even enter?" She queried him.

She quickly picked up Zion from the sofa as if to prevent

Alex from kidnapping her.

"Vivian, please I am very sorry. Where is mama?"

"Sorry for what? Please just leave here right now!" She shouted at him, pointing to the door.

"I don't want you around me or my baby. Please leave! Now!!!!" She screamed angrily.

"Haha! Who are you fighting? Grandma asked as she walked into the house from outside. She saw Alex and was shocked. She hissed and clasped her hands together.

"So, you are back, finally back to your senses. Or you have come to insult me again?"

Alex prostrated before both of them...

"Mama, please I am sorry. Help me to beg Vivian... I don't know what came over me... I just woke up this morning and everything around me was so abnormal... I realised

something wrong had happened somewhere when I didn't see Vivian... I have sent Lilian packing before I found my way here... Mama, Vivian, please forgive me." He pleaded.

"Ha! My God is so good. Lord you finally broke the jinx. Thank you faithful father." Mama replied and continued. "Alex, do you remember that you chased me out of your house the day I visited you and met you washing Lilian's clothes and cooking at the same time, while she was seated comfortably watching Television in the living room? I complained to you that this is not right and I told you that you should at least come and see your wife and baby... You chased me out and told me never to come to your house again... That was over a year ago... Since then, you never stepped your foot here. Ha! God, you are faithful... Jesus I thank you." Mama went on her knees, thanking God...

She then stood up and said to Vivian who was already crying,

"Vivian, my daughter... You are indeed a woman of virtue... Please forgive your husband... We both know it wasn't

ordinary. Let's just thank God that all our prayers, fasting and vigils in this house all because of Alex had not been in vain..."

"Mama thank you." Alex replied as he rose from his lying position. He embraced both Vivian and Zion."

"I have been through a lot Alex... If not for mama here, only God knows how I would have coped." Vivian wept.

"I know... I will never leave you again... I promise. I am so sorry for all the years I haven't been there for you and our daughter... All that happened was as a result of my weak prayer life... I am back and we are fighting together this time. I will be strong for you, and for us... I love you so much."

"I miss you Alex... Those years of separation were like hell for me... We owe mama a lot. She is a good mother indeed."

"I miss you too my sweetheart. I don't know what came over me! Mama, thank you for being there for us and for not

giving up on me. Thank you for taking care of my wife and daughter."

"Let's thank God my son, if I don't fight for you, who else will?"

"Mama, you said it... You said my marriage won't fail... You gave me hope when I had none left in me... Thank you Jesus for bringing back my husband to me." Vivian said and embraced her mum in law.

Alex carried Zion and smiled.

"My angel is beautiful, just like her mum." He remarked.

"Na me she resemble joor." Grandma replied and they all laughed.

## EPILOGUE

After two years, Alex and Vivian had another baby girl. They named her Beulah. Lilian never came back again. They had rest on every side.

God answered Caroline's prayers. She took in and gave birth to a set of triplets (two girls and a boy). It was exactly the eighth year of their marriage. Victor was filled with so much joy. They have four kids altogether including Daniel.

God is faithful to His words. Whoever works for him will never be put to shame. Caroline kept supporting her husband in the work of the ministry...

Christiana too later got engaged and got married two years after she gave birth to Daniel.

Rosemary and Andrew were also blessed with a bouncing baby boy, a year after their wedding.

To God be the glory!!!



**THE END.**

**"For there is hope for a tree if it is cut down, that it will sprout again..."**

**- Job 14:7a**

**Written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by  
Moyosore Teniola**

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## ABOUT THE BOOK



Three couples were entangled in a relationship that seemed so crazy and abnormal. Victor and Caroline, Alex and Vivian, Andrew and Rosemary...

Their lives took a turn that could have been capable of ruining their relationship but for the intervention of God.

WHISPERING HOPE is a novel that showcases how great the power of incessant prayers can work in a home.

it's filled with deep revelations and inspirations.

Every intending or married couple should read this inspirational novel.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Moyosore Teniola is a writer, an author, a ladies Coach, a wife, a mother and a lover of God.

She is the Founder of Esteem Ladies Foundation, a Non Governmental Organization for women and the girl child which has blessed a lot of lives by God's grace.

She has authored other Christian Novels like THE HONEYMOON, HUSBAND'S HOUSE, OMOSHALEWA and others, to the glory of God.

She has a burning passion for the girl child, single ladies and married women.

She is happily married to Kehinde Teniola and they are blessed with beautiful children.