

My Pastor, my love



Rita Okeah O

Great Grace Cathedral stood tall and imposing on the junction of Wilbur Street in Rumuigbo suburb of Port Harcourt city. The one storey building had occupied that spot for than two decades and had housed the numerous pastors and missionaries that had visited it. The building was a modern styled one with plenty rooms for various units of the church. It even had a well-stocked library that drew the teenagers frequently to the building. Great Grace Cathedral was a Pentecostal and spirit filled denomination having its headquarters in Lagos state where the founder Rev. Aluya resided with his family. Rev. Aluya only visited when there was an important occasion in the church but the congregation always looked forward to his visits which were quite rare.

The Sunday that Rev. Aluya visited the church, the congregation knew that something important had warranted his visit and sat expectantly as he climbed the pulpit.

‘Praise the lord, church’

‘Alleluyah’ the congregation shouted

‘God is good’ he said

‘All the time?’

‘God is good’

‘I bring you greetings from my beloved wife and the entire church in Lagos. I am happy to see that the church here is flourishing and there has not been any incidence of sorrow or death for a long time and for that we are grateful to God...’

The church congregation nodded in agreement each one looking around in appreciation of the fact that Rev. Aluya had reminded them. Indeed, they had been blessed and shielded by God’s grace.

‘I am here today for a very important occasion, praise the lord’

‘Alleluyah’ the church responded, now very attentive.

‘As you well know, Rev. Ohaneme has been with the church

for almost two decades now and one of the longest serving pastors in this church'

The congregation glanced at Rev. Ohaneme sitting quietly in the front pew with his lovely wife pastor grace. The couple had been with the church for a long time. Two of their four children had been teenagers when they came. Now two of the girls were already married with children and eldest son was also married with children except for the last son who just graduated from the university. Rev. Ohaneme was now in his early sixties and had grey hairs all about his beard. When he had come newly, he had no sign of grey and his wife now wore glasses. She had been a very elegant and beautiful lady which she still was but with a grace of eldership. Rev. Ohaneme and his wife seemed like the perfect shepherd for Great Grace Cathedral and the people loved them.

'I am here today to announce to the congregation the retirement of Rev. Ohaneme' Rev. Aluya announced.

The whole place grew still as though it was a graveyard. The fall of a pin could have been heard before a loud murmuring sound coupled with shouts evaded the sanctuary.

'No oh...

'It is not possible...

'Why now....

'Praise the lord', praise the lord?' Rev. Aluya tried to calm the people but could not succeed. A group of persons had crowded over the Rev. Ohaneme and his wife. They had known that a day like this will come but didn't know it was so soon.

'Please calm down everyone. Rev and his wife have served this organisation faithfully and it is time for them to take a rest. It may be painful for you but put yourself in their shoes. They need to rest and retire to other things that God will have them do in this later days of their lives.' Rev. Aluya continued to admonish the people and soon they calmed down with some crying softly and others with sad faces. He

gave the microphone to Rev. Ohaneme as he mounted the pulpit beside him.

'Praise the lord somebody' he greeted

'alleluyah'

'Somebody praise the lord louder' he shouted

'alleluyah'

'My wife and I with our entire family deeply appreciate your love and support over the years. While we are sad leaving, it is expedient that we go so that a more suitable pastor can take over and we rest.....' Rev. Ohaneme continued amidst tears and murmurings.

At the end of his speech, Rev. Aluya took over the microphone and before he closed the service, made an important announcement.

'A new pastor and assistant will be sent to the church by the end of the month and I will personally be here to see to that' he said.

Every one left for their homes that day wondering how the new pastor and his assistant will look like and if they would like them as they had liked Rev. Ohaneme.

The elders and church leaders organised a send forth party for the Ohanemes. Their four children came to grace the occasion with their small ones. The Ohanemes' were proud grandparents. No expense was spared in organising the party as members donated materials and money to show how much they loved their pastor.

That day, the rev and his wife wept at the show of love and abundance of gifts that the members of the church had given them.

'I and my family express our gratitude for this display of love and call on God to abundantly reward your labour of love' Rev. Ohaneme prayed for the congregation. A man of few words, he gave the mic to his wife pastor grace who started by singing.

' thanks, thanks, we give you thanks, for all you have done

in our lives, we are so glad, our souls have found rest, praise God, we give you thanks'

With tears running down her face, she began her long talk of appreciation...

'My able women, I thank you for all your support. I remember when I newly came here with my little children then. You took me as one of your own, you gave me foodstuffs and I didn't lack food in my kitchen. May this almighty God bless you all....

Pastor Grace finally finished her speech and one of the elders Mr Simeon Ake took over and asked the entire church to pray for the retiring pastor.

'our pastor has been carrying our burden and praying for us all the while, now it is our turn to pray that God will guide them and protect them in this new phase of life.....

The congregation lifted their voices and prayed for their pastor.

After the party, Rev. Ohaneme's children left for their various places while the members of the church too except for some that waited behind to plan the next move of the church. They knew that the new pastor and assistant will arrive in a week's time so they had to get the mission house ready to accommodate them.

Rev. Ohaneme and wife began to pack their belongings to make room for the new pastor and his assistant. By the end of that week, they had packed out of the church premises heading to their new residence.

Word must have gone out that the new pastor was coming that Sunday morning because the cathedral was full of people. They couldn't wait to see the new pastor and assistant. There had never been an assistant pastor before in GGC but it seemed they were getting one for the first time.

The congregation was seated already when Rev. Aluya and this time with his wife entered the auditorium. Rev. Mrs Aluya rarely visited and had only been to the church twice. She was an elderly looking but elegant soft spoken woman with a definite air of grace around her. Her countenance and carriage demanded attention and respect. As they walked into the church, the entire congregation stood up in respect. Elder Simeon Ake led them to the pulpit and gave rev, Aluya the microphone.

'Praise the lord' Rev. Aluya said  
'alleluyah'

'You are blessed people of God. Today, I am here again to present the new pastor to you. Before I do that, I want mama to greet the church' he said handing over the mic to his wife.

' Praise.....the .....Lord' Rev. Mrs shouted  
'alleluyah'

'God bless you all' she said.

Rev Aluya motioned for everyone to seat down while he remained standing.

'It is a privilege to let you know that the new pastor is a qualified person by God's grace to lead God's sheep.

Without wasting time, lets welcome Rev. Isaiah Osakwe and his wife pastor Mrs Sonia Osakwe' Rev. Aluya said.

The congregation was surprised to see their new pastor stand up from one of the seats in the church. They had expected to see him come from outside the church but alas he had been inside the church all along.

Rev. Isaiah and his wife walked towards the pulpit to Rev.

Aluya and when they faced the congregation, they clapped tremendously at what they saw.

The new pastor was a man in his early forties and he was handsome, light in complexion and tall with soft tender eyes. His wife was in her late thirties, a beautiful dark beauty with long hair escaping from the fancy hat she wore. The congregation saw the three children by their side, a boy and two girls all above the age of eight and gasped at their cuteness. It was clear that they had won the hearts of the people at the coos and nods of approval they gave. When Rev. Aluya took the mic to greet the people, they shrieked with joy at the deep sound of his voice. It was clear that they loved him and may soon forget the Ohanemes’

Rev Aluya prayed for the new pastor and his family and introduced them to the elders and the church formally. After the new pastor had sat down with his wife at their new designated place, Rev. Aluya motioned for his wife to meet him.

‘Mama, will do the honours of introducing the new assistant pastor’ he said.

‘Praise the lord somebody’ she greeted again

‘alleluyah’ the church responded

‘We have never had an assistant pastor in this church before because we felt that the elders and leaders were enough to oversee the running of the church. But with the growth and the new trends in church growth, the church board reviewed having an assistant for each church to help in the youth ministry especially. So we are starting it from this church by bringing an assistant pastor..’

The church members were getting impatient at the long speech and she could see it. She continued quickly as she read from the paper in her hand.

‘He is single but on fire for God. He is a dedicated child of God and a good leader of young people. Please give him your support as you will the lead pastor. Let’s put our hands together as we welcome Pastor Daniel Chibuike.....’

The church members almost stopped clapping when pastor Chibuike climbed the altar. He was not what they had expected. He was a thin man with hard rimmed round glasses too large for his nose to carry. Though he was brown skinned, he seemed too tall with the oversized suit, too large for his thin frame and his shoes looked as though it had seen better days. He walked towards Mrs Aluya, a very big bible by his side and knelt down as the congregation prayed for him. The young ladies who had been happy to hear that he was single were solely disappointed at the looks of the assistant pastor and the congregation realised that pastor Chibuike was the opposite of Rev. Isaiah.

Elder simeon had three daughters and a son. The girls prided themselves as the prettiest girls in the church and had lots of male attention to show for it. Antonia the first daughter had just finished her youth service while the middle girl Yolanda was a final year student of the university. The youngest had just entered the university but the eldest child the son was already working in an oil company in the city. Elder simeon was the most influential and wealthy elder amongst the church leaders and his family was a model in the church.

Antonia winked at Yolanda her sister who was busy scribbling something in her book.

‘What a disappointment’ Antonia whispered.

‘Tell me what I don’t know’

‘What a waste.. I thought Pastor Daniel would have been a good catch’

‘You can say that again. Even rev Isaiah is more presentable’ Yolanda sighed

‘Anyway, too bad.. I am not even interested in marrying a pastor’ Antonia said.

Antonia had had numerous suitors but had declined all with different excuses...’ he is not tall enough, he is not rich enough, he is stingy.... When they had heard that the assistant pastor was single, it had sparked their interest a



bit but they had been disappointed.

'If you are not interested, why waste your breath talking about him? Said Anita the youngest sister who had been silently listening to the conversation.

'Mind your business' retorted Antonia.

After the close of service that day, all the youths were asked to wait behind for a formal introduction to the assistant pastor who will oversee the youth.

The elders and Rev. Aluya formally presented the new pastors and their family to the youth and left them to interact. Rev Isaiah addressed the large crowd of young people and also left with pastor Chibuike in charge.

'Hello young people of God. As your know, my name is Daniel Chibuike but you can call me pastor C. I am happy to be here to serve...' pastor C spoke for the first time and a sudden hush fell on the youth who had been preoccupied before then with their phones. He had a striking soothing voice that didn't match his frame. When he opened his mouth to speak again, a pair of perfect dentition greeted the audience who now paid close attention as he spoke fluently that even Antonia was somehow slightly impressed.

'I promise you a very swell time in the youth church if only you will give me your support' he continued talking and paused suddenly and pointed at Yolanda.

'What is your name? Pastor C asked

'Yolanda Ake' she replied amidst sudden fake coughs from the other youths.

'Ah.. I see.. Are you elder Ake's daughter?

'Yes sir'

'Ok. Kindly get me the names and contact details of every person here today' pastor C said

'Yolanda has a new husband' teased Anita as they left for the car park later

'Stop it. Do I look like a pastor's wife? She asked

'But I think he is interested in you duh' Antonia said  
'Well it's too early for that. Besides, I don't like him'  
'Time will tell'

Pastor C had fallen in love at first sight looking at Yolanda. He had seen her the moment he entered the church singing with the choir. He had felt a pull towards her and knowing that she was even elder Ake's daughter had filled him with joy. Perhaps he had seen his wife? He knew it was a huge task he had ahead of him and though he had signed up for it, he nonetheless knelt down to pray for God's strength. The kind of youth he had seen in the church was more sophisticated and aware than he had imagined.

He removed his glasses, cleaned his eyes and surveyed his new apartment. There was nothing to complain about. It was a self-contained one room apartment with a little kitchen and convenience. He slowly and carefully unpacked his clothes from his suitcase smiling softly at the number of oversized suits he had bought. Soon the lights came on as the church generator came alive. He had never met Rev. Isaiah before but he seemed like a good person and his children were so adorable.

'I wish to have a family exactly like that in the future' he murmured to himself

He settled in the well-made bed and brought out the long list that Yolanda had given to him. It held a total of seventy youths and most of them were in the university close to the church. As he continued to go through the list, a knock sounded at his door.

'Pastor, pastor.' It was Adanne, the first daughter of Rev. Isaiah.

'Yes Ada' he answered and opened the door.

'My mummy said that I should bring this food to you' she said setting down a tray of covered dishes.

'Oh, God bless her. Tell her thank you' he replied.

He had forgotten that he had barely eaten anything that Sunday. He had been so excited at the new assignment that

he had rushed his breakfast. Opening the dishes, he whistled softly.

‘What a sight’ he laughed with joy. A bowl held a steaming sweet stew with assorted meats while the other held white rice and fried plantain. A small jug had iced cold water with a small can of orange juice by the side. Pastor C quickly washed his hands and soon he had devoured the food.

‘With meals like this, I would soon add some extra kilos’ he said to himself. He took his bath and was soon fast asleep.

With one week spent already, pastor C began to feel at home. He had bought some cooking utensils but it seemed a waste as Rev. Isaiah's wife kept sending delicious meals to him almost every day. He had tried to protest but she had waved him aside.

'Don't worry, let me feed you fat for one month' she had laughed

'Thank you ma. But with this, I will become too lazy'

'You need to plan getting married. Maybe now that you are here, you will see some fresh girl' she laughed.

'hmm?

'What? Don't tell me that you have not seen any yet. I have seen too many already' she said

'I am seeing but I wonder if they are seeing me.. I want to be led' he replied

Chibuike had seen a lot of them but it seemed none of them saw him. The first time he attended the choir rehearsal, he noticed how melodious Yolanda's voice was. Of all the sisters in the church, she was his number one choice but the more he tried to make her his friend, the more she withdrew from him.

'Yolanda, can you wait after the rehearsal?he said

' I have to leave immediately,sorry about that' she replied  
'Why?'

'I came in from school for the rehearsal and I need to go back immediately for something urgent' she said

Chibuike sensed that she was lying but could not do anything. He realized that he had been staring at Yolanda too long when the assistant choir leader called him.

' Pastor Chibuike' she called. She had never agreed to call him pastor C

'Yes'

'You should see if you can lead this song for our special ministration on Sunday' she said

'Ok deaconess Mirabel' he replied

Deaconess Mirabel was single too and one of the most active worker that he had seen in the GGC. He wondered why she was still single because she looked like someone in her early thirties. She worked in a bank as he had come to know and though she was not his kind of woman, she was still beautiful. She was tall and light in complexion and one can tell she spent a lot of time and money on her looks. She seemed perfect but Chibuike did not look at her twice in compared to Yolanda.

‘ So you need to wait behind so we can discuss how the rendition will look like on Sunday’ Mirabel said

At the close of the rehearsal, he watched Yolanda rushed out and frowned when he spied a car waiting for her outside..

‘Yolanda was with someone’ he concluded. She was just the kind of girl he had dreamt of. She was slim, petite and of caramel complexion and her smile was dashing and her voice was one of the things that had drawn him closer. She had a husky voice that when she sang sent shivers down his spine.

‘ Hmmm, pastor’ called Mirabel

‘ Yes, yes’

‘Do you mind if we do this in your house? She asked

‘Yes I do. It is not proper for a single sister to visit a single brother and you know I live inside the church premises’

‘Ok, no worries. Let’s do this’ she said

Chibuike could not wait to finish the assignment with Mirabel. He felt uncomfortable with her and when she handed him an envelope, he was amazed the more. He opened the envelope to see wads of naira notes.

‘ What is this for? He asked

‘Just enjoy yourself with it’ she laughed

‘I can’t accept this’

‘It is just a seed. Take it and buy some foodstuffs’

‘hmm. Ok. Thank you and God bless you’ he finally said.

‘We see on Sunday’ she said getting up to leave

‘Ok,bye’

Chibuikwe watched her leave in her smart car and shook his head. He was definitely not attracted to Mirabel and he had to find a way to let her know before she got her hopes too high.

Rev. Isaiah called Chibuikwe after the Sunday service for a meeting. Both of them had been officiating in all the services and the people really enjoyed the services from the nods and after greetings. Chibuikwe had led the Sunday school that day and had also led the choir in their special ministration wowing the crowd with his voice. Singing was one of the things he liked to do and he was glad to have blessed lives that Sunday.

'Pastor, we need to assess the service and see how well we did and where to improve where necessary' rev. Isaiah said  
'There are a lot of persons who didn't attend service today from the list I was given by the old pastor' he continued.

'Ok sir'

'We should think of doing some follow ups this week to know why these persons didn't attend service'

'That will be a good idea'

'There is a follow up department already but I want you to head that department now'

Ok sir'

'So I will give you the list and then you can team up with the members of the team to make it happen'

'I will do that sir'

'Thank you and God bless you. That will be all for now' rev. Isaiah drew the meeting to a close.

Pastor Chibuikwe went to his new office and brought out the list he had been given. He looked at the list of the members of the follow up team and smiled when he saw Yolanda's name. 'It seemed she liked what he liked' he mused. He would call all of them for a meeting on Tuesday and they would arrange how the follow up would look like. He had seen her beautiful face with her sophisticated dressing

during church but did not have the chance to talk with her. Looking down the list, he frowned at Mirabel's name as one of the team leaders.

'Yolanda, I have good news for you' Antonia shouted as soon as she entered the house

'What is it that you didn't even wait to enter the house'

Yolanda said

'I am engaged, see my ring' Antonia shouted.

'What? Has Henry finally proposed?

'Yes oh. Get ready for aseobi' she laughed happily

'Hmmm, congrats. But I am still sceptical. You know Henry is not really born again? Yolanda said

'Yeah. He goes to church, it's enough'

'What will dad and mum say?

'Will they know? The guy is handsome and rich and he is not a pagan. When we marry, he will be serious'

'Ok oh, if you say so'

'See who is talking. Pastor C is showing interest but you snub him'

'I don't want to marry a pastor jor. Have you seen his dressing?

'See you.. Then leave me to marry my church goer'

Yolanda had been avoiding the assistant pastor. He was not her taste or kind of man. She only loved his height otherwise, other things were no way. He could sing as well but he didn't dress well and he was not rich either. He had tried to pair her with him for the follow up visits but she had used school tests as an excuse to not go .

'Henry and his people will be coming next week for introduction' said Antonia

'Wow, so soon?

'Yes. So come let's start planning'

Antonia called Anita from her room and the three girls began to plan for the upcoming wedding. It was the first one in the family and they knew it will be the talk of the town.

Pastor Chibuike heard the knock on his office door and opened it to see Antonia looking very happy and dressed beautifully.

'Pastor Isaiah asked me to come and see you for the marriage forms' she gushed out after greetings.

'What? Who is getting married?

'Me' she laughed

'Congrats. Who is the lucky chap?

'You won't know him. His name is Henry'

'Is he a member of the church?

'No. He attends another church

'Well, it doesn't matter so much as long as he is born again'

'Hmm.. I think so' she said

'You think so? You should know so. Don't you know that marriage decision is very important? It could make or mar you'

'He will change after marriage. I will make him more serious for God' Antonia said

Chibuike laughed so hard that Antonia looked at him bewildered. 'Why was he behaving so rude and what was his business anyway' she thought

'Pastor C, please stop laughing. I am already engaged and it's serious. His people came for introduction last weekend'

'My dear, a broken engagement is better than a broken marriage. Have you not heard that saying?

Pastor, with due respect, I take offence at you trying to change my mind. I am not getting any younger and I truly love Henry and he loves me too. So if you don't mind, can I get the marriage form?

Chibuike gave her the forms and watched her leave. He was saddened at Antonia's decision but there was nothing he could do. He only felt concerned that now that Antonia was getting married, Yolanda will be the next in line. She had not given him the light of day to be friends not to mention proposing marriage to her.



Rev. Isaiah coupled with pastor Chibuike had a meeting with the intending couple and at first glance, Henry seemed like an arrogant spoilt brat. Chibuike didn't like his airs and the manner he spoke to them when they asked him simple questions.

'Young man, are you ready to settle down? Rev. Isaiah asked  
' I won't be here if I was not ready sir' he replied

'So which church do you attend because I assume you are born again?

' One of those churches in the city central but you won't know it' he replied

'So where do you work? What do you do for a living? Chibuike finally asked.

'I am into business and stuff' he replied looking at him with disdain.

Chibuike felt little pity for Antonia looking at Henry. He looked too unserious even though he seemed rich and judging from his looks and his words, he was certainly a church goer. Antonia left that day with Henry after Rev. Isaiah reluctantly agreed to a wedding date.

'Thank you pastor for your understanding' Antonia said  
' You are welcome'

'I sincerely hope that she won't regret this marriage' Chibuike said after they had gone

'Well, we can't choose for anyone. They have agreed to marry, so ours is to respect their choices'

'That's true'

'So how about you? Are you thinking of getting a wife? Asked Rev. Isaiah

'I am. I have someone in mind already.'

'Good for you'

Rev. Isaiah gave Chibuike the latest names of those to follow up and he planned to visit Yolanda on his way to visit the new family that visited the church last Sunday.

Pastor Chibuike went along with two other brothers for the follow up that Monday evening. He took his time to wear his special suit and looking at his small mirror, he was satisfied with the way he looked even though he almost swam inside the bogus clothes.

The new family was pleased to receive the visitors from the church and entertained them very well. One of the reasons Chibuike was excited with follow up visitation was the show of hospitality that majority of the people gave them. The new family had recently relocated to the area and had joined them for fellowship that Sunday.

'Thank you so much pastor for visiting us' Mr Amadi said. He formally introduced his family to the team and Chibuike was amazed that he had three grown up children.

'Meet Chizi, he is our eldest son. He just finished his masters and will soon be leaving for his new job'

'Good to meet you'

'Here is our second son Ogbonna, he just finished his NYSC and our last child is not here Homachisom, a final year student and our only daughter' Mr Amadi made the entire introduction while Mrs Amadi ran around to entertain them. Pastor Chibuike had seen the elderly couple in church that Sunday morning but didn't have the opportunity to greet them because of the youth meeting after the service. Here was an opportunity to know the young men better. They spent hours talking and finally left after eating lunch with them, Chibuike promised to visit again as they started off for home.

'Elder Ake's house is not far from here' one of the brothers said as they passed a house.

'Well, let's just say hello briefly then' Chibuike said  
Chibuike was intimidated with the huge structure of elder's house. He had never visited them before and entering the edifice was like entering a palace. Two huge dogs barked ferociously as they knocked on the imposing gate. The

gatemanager opened the small gate and looking at them suspiciously asked them who they were looking for.

'My name is pastor Chibuike from Great Grace Cathedral and I want to see elder Ake'

'He is not around' the gateman replied

'What of Yolanda?

'Let me check. Wait here'

Chibuike and the others waited patiently for what looked like eternity for the gateman to return and when he did, Yolanda was at his heels.

'What are you doing here pastor C? She asked

'We were just in the neighbourhood and decided to stop over'

'Hmm. You are lucky. I was about going out. You can come inside' Yolanda said

The dogs were held back as the team entered the compound. The three luxurious cars in the compound gleamed as though it was just an ornament and had never been driven. The lawns were well kept and Chibuike spied a small pool by the side of the huge house. When they entered the sitting room, he was almost blinded by the rich golden interior decorations. Everywhere gleamed with the smell of opulence and grandeur. Chibuike felt quite inadequate sitting at the soft sofa that almost swallowed him when he sat on it.

'So what can I offer you? Yolanda asked

'Water will be okay' he replied

'Oh no. let me call the maid to attend to you but I have to be on my way if you don't mind' Yolanda said going indoors.

'In that case, no need to wait then'

'Sis Yolanda, we will go with whatever you have to give us' one of the brothers said

Chibuike wanted to talk to Yolanda before but after the visit to her house, he knew it was going to be a difficult task. He watched the maid drive in a trolley full of drinks and food and while the two brothers pack the items into a bag, he

sighed with disappointment. The odds that Yolanda will say 'no' to his proposal was high.

The whole church was in full swing at the preparation of the wedding of Antonia and Henry. This will be the first wedding conducted by Rev. Isaiah in the new station and he wanted it to be perfect. Elder Ake also wanted it to be a grand affair since it was also the first wedding in his family. Chibuike was sent to represent the church at the traditional marriage ceremony that took place at Elder Ake's house. He was stunned by the display of wealth and extravagance. Though he listened and watched the whole proceedings, he paid little attention. He had eyes only for Yolanda who dazzled in pink flowing native attire complete with native head gear styled in a butterfly manner. There were almost twenty young ladies dressed in the same aseobi like Yolanda but she stood out.

Antonia walked out of the house for the first outing to greet the teeming crowd with her train of young ladies.

'She looks like a Goddess' someone whispered close to Chibuike who only nodded.

'She certainly looks different' he murmured

Antonia had been transformed by make up into a very beautiful bride and she radiated as though the sun smiled at her as her skin glowed. Henry on his part looked like the cat that had the cream waiting for Antonia to get to where he was. He was dressed in an elaborate designed sultan with a wide rimmed native hat. He held a walking stick as he danced lightly to the music in the background. His friends gathered about him all dressed in matching outfits.

Looking at the whole scenario, Chibuike wondered how much had gone into the wedding already. He sat with some of the members of the church under a designated canopy watching and imagining how he could finally summon the courage to propose to Yolanda who was already getting so much attention from the numerous young eligible men

around.

'Pastor, we have to leave now' Mirabel intruded into his thoughts.

'Why? He asked

' The ceremony is almost over and I need to touch one or two places' she replied. She had brought him and three others in her car. Chibuike wanted to stay and have a word with Yolanda but he knew Mirabel won't agree to wait.

Antonia had come out for the final outing wearing similar clothes with Henry and they had been prayed for by their parents. The traditional rites were officially done.

Mirabel drove slowly past the fully parked street filled with different exotic cars that had come to grace the occasion.

Elder Ake had wowed the crowd with different delicacies and drinks that even pastor Chibuike had been given a huge bag of take away.

'Thank you deaconess' Chibuike said

'You are welcome. See you tomorrow for rehearsals'

'Ok'

Chibuike alighted from the car and waved as she drove off with the other three still inside the car. He stood for a while thoughtfully watching as he finally lost sight of the car. He sighed and went inside his self-contained apartment.

'Mirabel is a good girl.... But...let me see...

' I wonder if Yolanda will be at the rehearsal tomorrow' he thought

'I will definitely summon courage to propose to her' his mind was made up.

Yolanda didn't attend the rehearsal and she didn't come to church that Sunday either. She had travelled to Onitsha with Antonia for the final preparation for the white wedding that will take place that week end.

Chibuike was however glad to see that the new family visited the church again and this time, they came with their only daughter whom they introduced to him.

'Meet Homachisom. You didn't see her the other day you visited us' the mother said.

' Please to meet you pastor Daniel' she said

' The pleasure is mine and please call me pastor C. how are you doing with studies and all? He asked politely. He glanced at her properly for the first time and as their eyes met, he was amazed at what he saw. She was almost as tall as him. She had very light brown eyes almost hazel that seemed to Dance when she talked and that matched her light caramel skin. She smiled at him and revealed a gap between her teeth with one secret dimple. She was pretty but Yolanda was prettier he thought.

'School is fine and I am almost done with project work' Homa replied.

' Great. That means you can join a department in church. Maybe choir? He asked

' Oh sorry, I can't sing' she laughed.

' Really? He was further disappointed. He loved to sing and Yolanda was a nightingale, one of the reasons he had been drawn to her.

'Yes. I love children but I think I can work with the teenagers if there is a department like that' she said

' We will work out something . Maybe after the upcoming wedding, we will meet again'

Homa left with her mother that day wondering at pastor Chibuike. He looked young but carried himself as though too old and she could see that he needed a serious make over with his wardrobe. She shrugged her shoulders as they left

for home. One thing was certain that she had liked the new church and the senior pastor had preached quite a refreshing sermon.

‘ You can’t serve God and not be blessed. The bible clearly states in exodus chapter 23’ 25 that ‘ you shall serve the lord and he shall bless your bread and water. The three dominant areas you can extend your service to God is through your time, your talent and your treasure.

Homa had been wrapped up with the message , examining her life and deciding that it was time to serve God wholeheartedly with her time, talent and treasure. Hence, her reason for telling Chibuike about the teens church. She looked forward to the next service day to know when she could get started with her service to God.

It was the Saturday and the wedding day for Antonia and henry. The church auditorium was packed full with people both distinguished and dignitaries. The whole place shone with wedding decorations and pastor Chibuike could not believe the change from the previous Sunday. It was clear that elder Ake had spared no change for his first daughter’s wedding. He tried to adjust the bow tie on his neck.

‘Pastor C, do you need help with that? Mirabel said walking towards him.

‘No thanks’ he said quickly

‘If I must say, you look different today’ she laughed.

‘Thanks to you, God bless you’ he said

He had been surprised at the parcel that Friday evening that Mirabel brought it to his office. He was reading a book when she had knocked and walked into the office with a big package.

‘ Good evening pastor Chibuike’

‘Good evening deaconess Mirabel. How are you today?

‘I am fine. I brought you something from the office today’

‘ Oh. ‘ He was surprised

‘ A guy brought some neat suits to the bank today and I saw

one I think will be perfect for you to wear for the wedding tomorrow' she said handing over the parcel to him.

'Thank you sis, but you shouldn't have spent your money on me' he protested

'I don't mind doing it'

'Well thanks and God bless you' he replied

The suit was an expensive one judging from the feel of the material and it didn't look cheap either and when he wore it, it fitted him perfectly. He was pleased at how he looked when he sighted himself on his small standing mirror.

'I look fly but I don't want to encourage this' he muttered to himself

His new suit must have sent signals to the ladies because it seemed all eyes were on him when he mounted the pulpit for the introduction of the ceremony.

'Can we all rise and pray?' pastor Chibuike began .

The ceremony ended and visitors began rushing out for the reception as others wanted to take some pictures with the newlyweds. Pastor Chibuike quickly took pictures with the couple and made haste to return to his room for a change of comfortable clothes. He almost collided with Yolanda who must have forgotten something.

'Hey Yolanda, how are you?

'I am fine pastor'

'You look great.'

'And you too. You look different today' she replied

'Thank you...hmm I have been meaning to have some discussion with you. When can we see? Pastor Chibuike could not miss the golden opportunity.

'Hmm, let me see. Maybe next week Wednesday at my house' she said

'Perfect, see you then' he replied

He walked like someone walking on air whistling slowly as he packed his bag from the office. He will sleep soundly



tonight with the thought of finally meeting Yolanda. As he opened the door of his office, he sighed heavily at the sight of Mirabel with a cooler of food.

'Pastor Chibuike, this cooler of food is for you from the marriage committee and they asked me to deliver it to you' she smiled at him.

'Or really?

'Yes. And if you don't mind, I will take it to your apartment for you' she said

'No' he almost shouted. He quickly snatched the cooler of food from her and walked briskly to his apartment glancing back to see if she had followed him. When he made it inside, he breathed with relief at the narrow escape.

He was amazed at the number of visits to his office the following Monday. Mirabel had bought him a new pair of shoes and he was glad when it was not his size.

'Please, it's not necessary..All this gifts' he said

'Please don't stop my blessing. I am doing it for God' she laughed.

'Please give directly to the church. I am satisfied with the ones I have'

'Don't worry. I love doing it'

After she left, two sisters Ezinne and Adanne both in the choir came to see him.

'We came to clean the church and decided to say hello to you' Ezinne said

'Pastor, you looked dashing yesterday' Adanne said looking directly at him.

'Thanks to deaconess Mirabel' he replied with a smile

'What? Do you have anything with her? Ezinne was surprised.

'Not at all' he said

When they eventually left, he was in deep thought at the turn of events. He decided that he was never going to wear the suit that Mirabel had brought for him for his sanity.

Homachisom had visited rev. Isaiah's wife that Monday as well to talk about starting the teen department and they had talked far into the evening about innovative ideas both shared that they had lost track of time. She ended up helping her to cook dinner.

'You are such a dear' Mrs Isaiah said

'Thank you ma. It was a pleasure serving you' Homa replied.

'You are intelligent and smart and you remind me in so many ways of my younger self'

'You are not old ma'

'Really? Ok oh. Thanks for coming. We will fine-tune our ideas when we meet on Wednesday again' Mrs Isaiah said.

'Ok. I have to be on my way then'

'Oh please, just drop of this cooler of food to pastor Chibuike' Mrs Isaiah said

'Ok'

Homa knocked on pastor Chibuike's office and went in when he asked her to enter.

'Good evening pastor c'

Chibuike like the way she called him though it was how others called him but it sounded different .

'Good evening'

'Mama said I should drop this for you' she said setting the cooler of food on his desk.

'Thanks'

'So you don't cook?' she asked

'I do but not all the time with mama always sending me her delicacies' he laughed.

'I have never heard you laugh before. I thought you are just spirit and fearful things'

'You are not serious' he laughed again and this time she joined in the laughter.

'Well, I have to be on my way'

'Thanks'

'You are welcome'

Chibuike had worn one of his old suits again and he felt very comfortable in it as he knocked on the gate to Yolanda's house. It was Wednesday and it was the third time he would visit the compound. The gateman spied him and opened the gate.

'Na you be their pastor abi? He asked

'Yes, please tell Yolanda that I am here'

The gateman came back in a while and led him into one of the smack sitting rooms in the big house. He fidgeted about waiting for Yolanda to show up and almost pee on himself when elder Ake showed up instead.

'Good evening elder' Chibuike greeted.

'Pastor Chibuike, good evening' he replied

'So what brought you here today? Elder asked

'I am here to see Yolanda'

'Hmm?i hope you are not getting any silly ideas? He looked boldly at pastor Chibuike.

'Em ...em

'Well, for your information, none of my daughters will marry a pastor, not a wretched pastor' he said loudly

'Em .. Em..

'Just so you know. I hope we are clear on that? He walked away as Yolanda came into the room.

'What is my dad rattling about? She asked

'Em... nothing... how are you?

'I am fine. Let me get you something to drink' she said leaving again

Chibuike was troubled. How could he propose to Yolanda when elder was breathing down fire? Would she agree? And how would they manoeuvre over elder if she agreed?

'Here you go' she had returned with drinks and little cupcakes.

'Thank you Yolanda' he murmured

'So what is it you wanted to say to me because I have to rush to the salon soon' she said

'Em... I don't know how to say this but I will just try... I have

been with this church for a while now and I have observed you a lot and I feel both of us have a lot in common. I think the lord id placing it in my heart that you are my life partner.

There. He had said it. He was relieved and at the same time troubled. What will Yolanda say in response? He waited with bated breath and glanced briefly at her.

She laughed and clapped her hands softly and then looking at him, told him how she felt.

‘ Pastor Chibuike, I am not going to marry a pastor and not you. I have my taste and you don’t fit at all. We don’t have anything in common. I have known for a while your interest in me and I just obliged you so that you could get it over with and we both have our peace. I am sorry , I can’t marry me..’

‘ Why? Won’t you take a moment and pray about it?

‘ Why should i? You are not rich and your sense of fashion is not here. Besides, I am not cut out to be a pastor’s wife. Did you see Antonia’s husband? I can’t go lower’

Chibuike was devastated as he finally stood up from the couch. Deep down, he had known that she would not agree to his proposal but he had gone on thinking that miracles could still happen.

Pastor Chibuike couldn't sleep that night. He turned and tossed until he finally slept off around one am in the morning. The thoughts that ran through his minds were ugly ones and he couldn't and didn't feel the urge to pray either. He woke up suddenly at the sound of shouts and when he listened, it was more troubled.

'Come oh. Someone has stolen the church generator' rev. Isaiah shouted.

'What?

'How manage? Mama asked

When Chibuike met them at the spot, he discovered that the thief had not only done away with the generator but also with the water pump.

' So people no longer have fear for God's house? Mama lamented

'This is very bad' Chibuike said shaking his head. Too many things were happening at the same time and he didn't like it. It had started first with elders shaming, Yolanda's refusal and now the theft.

'This means we will need a security guard then. I had thought that with us staying in the parsonage that there was no need. But it seems we do need' rev. Isaiah said. That Sunday morning, the church senior pianist called in that his wife was having their baby so would not be in church. Rev. Isaiah told Chibuike before the service began and they were surprised when the assistant pianist didn't show up for service either.

' What happened to Eric? Chibuike asked the drummer when it was certain that the service will not be having any pianist.

'I don't know sir' the drummer replied.

'What a week' he muttered to himself.

He was glad that elder Ake and his family didn't come to church that Sunday. They had all gone for wedding thanksgiving at Henry's church.

'We are sorry to announce the theft of the church generator

and water pump' rev. Isaiah announced.

' As a result of this, we are going to need a new generator as well as a water pump. We are also thinking about getting a security guard when the elders meet immediately after service' he continued.

'Let's pray and hand over this matter before God. We are going to also hand over the robbers to the devil to torment unless they repent' he said.

After the prayers, the sermon was preached and Chibuike felt as though he had just left the hospital bed. He was weary in body as well as his spirit and it must have shown because Adanne walked up to him and asked him what was wrong.

' I am okay' he replied

'You don't look fine pastor. I will get something for you to drink' she said

'Don't bother' he protested

' Not a problem' she said leaving

As Adanne left, Chibuike assessed her again and though he was not Yolanda, she was pretty in her own way. He had not noticed her so well before though she was also in the choir with her younger sister Ezinne. Adanne was better than Mirabel he concluded. Maybe he should start looking elsewhere now that Yolanda had refused his proposal.

He felt a little better after the chilled bottle of five alive that Adanne had brought and he was glad she had insisted.

'Pastor c, please get some of your follow up members and do some intense one tomorrow' rev. Isaiah told him after the service.

'Ok sir'

'Try and locate the assistant pianist and the senior pianist. He called that the wife has been delivered of a boy'

' Wow, congratulations to him. I will call my team'

Chibuike called the follow up team and was able to get four persons ready for the visitation. He was glad that Adanne was available and amazed to find Homa's name in the list as

well. When had she joined the follow up team? When he called her, she was available as well as bro Amos, a dedicated deacon. He was happy when the four of them met at the church to pray briefly before starting out.

‘Pastor, is it not better we go in twos and do separate visitation to save time? Homa said

‘That’s not bad’ Adanne said

‘Deacon, what do you think? Chibuike asked

‘It might be a good idea. I can go with Homa while you go with Adanne’ Amos said

Chibuike was glad to go with Adanne. Both of them visited the assistant pianist while Homa and Amos visited the senior pianist who had a new baby. Pastor c met the young man outside playing with some group of young men like him playing a board game.

‘Hey pastor, you visit? He laughed

‘Yes Eric. We did not see you in church yesterday. How are you and what happened?

‘Pastor, you no go understand’

‘Really? What happened?

‘I get to go hustle yesterday playing for a band at a wedding reception’

‘What, you went elsewhere to play? Adanne asked

‘Pastor Man, wetin you want am to do? Guys get to hustle oh’ one of his friends said

Chibuike looked at him and wondered what sort of friends Eric kept. His eyes were red and he wore his hair in dreadlocks chopped off by the sides. He looked mean and Dangerous.

So what did you hustle out? Adanne asked

‘wetin you mean. Church de pay Eric before?

‘My guy relax’ Eric tried to calm his friend

‘My friend, Jesus loves you. I hope you know that’ pastor Chibuike said after he listened to the ranting’s of the young man. He shared the gospel with Eric’s friends that day. They had so many questions to ask and he answered but invited

them to visit the church on Sunday.

'If I get job, I go come. You fit employ me? Scorpion asked. That was the name he gave to pastor c.

'What can you do?

'As you see me so, I be graduate oh. I graduated from Oko polytechnic as electrical engineer but na condition make crayfish bend....'

'I see....

'If you give me job, I go come your church'

The other guys laughed at his remarks but scorpion was serious. Chibuike took his phone number promising to get him a job. Eric apologised for not attending Sunday service but had not known that the senior pianist won't be available. At the end of day, it was a good visit and pastor Chibuike was glad he had talked with young men.

Three months later, Homa was visiting pastor Isaiah's wife for counselling. The visitation with deacon Amos had sparked a friendship between them. She had become good friends with him and she could see that he seemed interested in her. He had arranged a meeting with her at the church for Thursday and suspecting what the meeting could be, she had arranged to see mama first.

'Do you like him? Mrs Isaiah asked Homa

'I think so'

'You don't think, you need to know. If he proposes, what will be your answer? She asked

'I really don't know ma'

'Hmmm.. You have to tell him that you will pray about it and decide'

'Ok ma'

'You have to pray well. Marriage is not a casual thing. You have to choose your life's mate carefully. From this decision will come 90 percent of all your happiness or miseries'

'Wow. Mama, you are deep' she laughed.

Pastor c met the two ladies laughing and wondered at the



closeness. He had not paid attention to Homa since the visitation with Adanne. He knew that she was getting friendly with Amos and wished them well even as he had made up his mind for Adanne.

'I am happy to see so much joy' he laughed too

'Pastor C, you have added some weight' Homa teased

'Thanks to mama here' he laughed

'The only thing that requires some change is your dressing' Homa said

'Thank you, I like it like that'

'Pastor C, Homa here can give you a makeover if you want'

'Really? Thanks but no thanks'

'I will do it for free. I like giving make overs. All you need is to get suits two sizes less than what you are wearing now. Give your beards a trim and remove those gruesome glasses' Homa continued.

'I will tell you when I am ready. Right now, I have a meeting to attend' pastor c said as he left them laughing.

'This pastor en.' Homa laughed watching him go.

'Maybe he will change when he gets married. I see him getting close to Adanne' mama said

'Ok. Let's watch and see'

'Hello' Chibuike said picking the call

'Hello Dan, the voice on the other side said

'Chike'

'Yes Dan. I didn't hear from you . Its more than one year now'

'I told you not to call me, didn't i? I said I will call you'

'It's more than a year now. Have you forgotten the arrangement? I am getting tired'

'I know. Hold on a bit, I am still trying to tie some loose ends'

'Hmmm. You know that time is running out Dan and I can't keep quiet for too long' chike said

'Don't worry, I will call you soon' Chibuike hung up quickly.

Time was running out and he had not done half of what he needed to do. He brought out the file from his bottom locker and looked at the sheet of paper again and again. He had to act fast before Chike blew the whistle. Adanne had called him earlier that she was bringing some roasted corn and coconut for him and as he waited anxiously for her, he brought out the ring he had brought. He knew she would accept his proposal. The knock on the door filled him with joy because he was sure that it was her.

'Come in' he said

'Pastor Chibuike, good afternoon'

'Good day Adanne, how are you?'

'I am fine. I brought the corn' she said with a smile. He couldn't believe that he had loved Yolanda when Adanne was more beautiful. In a way, he was glad that Yolanda had rejected his proposal, else he would have made a huge mistake.

'Thank you. Have your seat while I use the toilet' he said. He hurriedly left the office and not too soon before his phone rang. 'I hope it is not Chike again' he thought

'Hello' he muttered

'Dan, it me'

'Eze?'

'Yes, I am sorry I called you but there is an emergency'

'Can't it wait. I am really in the middle of something important'

'Please, come now, it is urgent'

'Ok. I will be there' he muttered after looking at his wristwatch.

He finished at the toilet and met Adanne reading one of the books on his table.

'Ada, I have to leave you for a while. Please can you wait for me?'

'Of course. You told me that you had an important talk with me' she smiled

Adanne knew that she had captured Chibuike's heart

already and that it was a matter of time before he proposed marriage. She still didn't like the way he dressed but he seemed a nice person and she felt she could change him eventually.

'Please, here is the key to my apartment. Feel at home. Maybe you can watch some movies while I dash out quickly for something urgent. I will meet you there' he said rushing out.

'Ok, I will be waiting.

Adanne knew she had nailed it. Chibuike had never invited any sister to his apartment for the more than a year he had become the assistant pastor. The young ladies in the church knew everything about their assistant pastor. She had known that Yolanda had refused his proposal and she was glad it happened else how could she have been chosen?

Chibuike was exhausted when he reached his apartment two hours later. He was glad he had gone to fix the emergency because it could have been a disaster. He opened the door to his apartment not expecting it to be locked anyway. He briefly touched his trouser pocket to make sure that the box containing the ring was there before he entered the room. He almost ran out shouting at the sight before him.

Adanne was lying on his bed completely naked and she was wide awake.

'Jesus, Adanne' he shut his eyes

'Pastor, what's wrong? Have you not seen a naked woman before? She asked

'Please cover yourself immediately. My God. Why will you want to do this?

'Why are you shutting your eyes? Anyway I was hot, so I decided to uncover myself'

'Meet me at the office when you are well dressed. I am short of words right now' Chibuike said walking out.

Adanne smiled softly when he left. She had planned it that

way to see his reaction and it had been golden. Now that he had seen how beautiful she was, he will be fully convinced to marry her.

Pastor Chibuike almost ran over Homa in his hurry to enter the church. How stupid he had been, thinking that Adanne was the one? He had been totally unprepared to see her stark naked on his bed.

'Sorry sis Homa' he mumbled

'Pastor C, what's wrong? She asked

' Hmm, nothing' he replied rushing into his office.

Homa nodded and walked inside the church where she was meeting deacon Amos. They were supposed to meet that evening and she was not surprised to see him already seated and waiting for her.

' Good evening Amos' she smiled

'Good evening. You are several minutes late' he relied with a slight frown

' I am sorry . The taxi I entered broke down on the way , so I had to wait for another' she explained.

' Ok. Never mind, you are here now' he smiled

' So what is it that you wanted us to meet for?

' Hmm, you have been in this church for barely a year now and I have observed how committed you are in the church. I believe that God is telling me that you are my life partner.'

' Hmm. Really?

' Yes. In other words, I will like to marry you'

' Oh ,I am surprised' Homa said

Homa was not surprised at all. She had seen all the signs and knew it was a matter of time before he let the cat out of the bag.

' So what do you say? Amos asked

'I am flattered Amos, but I have to pray about it' she replied.

'What's there to pray about? I saw other girls before I approached you. You should be honoured' he said

' I am honoured but like I said I have to pray about it, it is a serious business' Homa said firmly.

‘Ok, if you insist’

Homa watched him go and knew her answer already but she would still pray about it, she decided. From the corner of her eyes, she had seen Adanne leaving pastor Chibuikes’s office and she had seen her wiping her eyes as someone crying.

‘ Come in’ Chibuike said to the knock on his office door

‘Pastor C, what’s going on. I am sorry to pry but I saw Adanne not quite long leave in tears’ Homa said

‘ It’s a long story but I guess I should tell someone about it’ Chibuike said

Pastor Chibuike watched Homa laughing at the story he gave and wondered why she was taking it so lightly. He had kept his ring hidden and Adanne had left upset when he scolded her.

‘ What you did today is very wrong’ he had told Adanne

‘ How many times will I say that I am sorry? She had replied.

‘ I am not that kind of man or pastor’ he said

‘ Ok... so why did you tell me to wait for you in your room. Besides, what’s was the important matter you wanted to discuss with me before all this fiasco’ she said

‘ Never mind. It was actually about something concerning the choir.. We will talk about another time’ he said.. He needed to clear his head first.

‘Choir? You wanted to tell me something about the choir? It is a joke right? She was beyond disappointed.

‘Yes’

‘You are not serious’ she had hissed and left the office in tears.

Homa laughed and laughed. She felt bad for Adanne as well as pastor Chibuike. They had seemed like a good pair.

‘Well don’t give up yet. She seems like a good girl. Time can change things for the better for both of you’ she said

‘ Enough of my sad story. What are you doing here this evening? He asked

‘ Hmm, I just got a marriage proposal that I will be praying

about'

'Wow, congratulations'

'Not yet oh, pastor C. I said I was going to pray about first' she laughed

'Why? Don't you like him?

'I do like him but that is not all I should be looking for.

According to mama, marriage is to be enjoyed not endured and she told me one other important thing..'

'What's that?

'You have to choose your life's mate carefully because from this decision will come ninety percent of all your happiness or misery' she concluded

'Wow, very profound' he shouted

'Yeah, so I am working with that. I have to look and ponder carefully before saying yes' Homa said

'What are you looking for anyway? He teased

'Certainly not a man dressing like you. At least Amos is a sharp dresser. You need serious make over' she laughed

'Ok oh. But seriously I know girls like you want a rich well-made guy like deacon Amos ..You are lucky he already proposed' he said

'Girls like me? You are funny...but not really. I want a man that fears and loves God foremost because he would love me. Sure, financial independence is good but not my number one criteria especially if the guy has potentials.

Anyway, why am I telling you self, I have to go now pastor C' she said.

When Homa left, Chibuike had to pray. He discovered that he had not really asked God to direct him in his quest for a wife. Homa had reminded him that fact when she had told him she was going to pray and for that he was deeply sorry to God. First it had been Yolanda, then Adanne and there was deaconess Mirabel too..

After his session of prayer, he felt it inside his spirit that God had heard him and that was when it dawned on him that he

had been blind. It had been staring at him all the while and he had nearly missed it.

It happened like a flash of light. One day, they were both unsure of their marital status and how to solve the dilemma of choosing the right spouse, and the next , they had found each other.

Homa seemed as though in a daze looking at the engagement ring on her finger. So she was indeed engaged to be married soon? She just knew that he was the one for her when he had suddenly shown up in her house the next day after their last meeting.

‘ I have been blind, now I see’ he had begun

‘ What do you mean? She had smiled waiting for him to continue

‘ I have been looking at Sokoto when all the while, it was inside my shokoto’ he continued

‘ Now, you are confusing me pastor c’

‘I just want to be plain as possible. I feel the impression that God has led you to me. In order words, I want you to be my wife? Will you? He asked and when she looked at him, she realized for the first time that he was not wearing his sad glasses. He looked totally different without it and at that moment, it seemed she could see into his soul and all she could see was sincerity and adoration.

‘ What? I am confused here. I thought I already told you about Amos? She said

‘ I know. But please pray about it if you have to but I know you are my wife now’ he said

‘ Hmm. That means I have to include you in this five days prayer’ she laughed

‘ Yes. Whatever it will take. I will wait and also be praying that you accept mine’

Pastor Chibuiké got a ‘yes’ from Homachisom three days later and jumped with joy. She had not waited for the five days as she had requested. They had met at his office and after teasing him a while, she accepted.

‘ Wow. Thank you Jesus’ he shouted



‘ But seriously, I will need to give you a makeover’ she laughed

‘No problem. I am just happy’

‘So what is next? She asked

‘First, let me get the ring. I want to give it to you in the presence of the senior pastor and his wife to show how serious I am’ he said

‘ Ok’

‘ We will do a small engagement party for only few persons. What do you think?

‘ I don’t think that is proper. What will my parents say if they find out without their consent? She said

‘ Yeah, that true. Ok, I will do it only with the senior pastor and wife’

‘Better’

Chibuike gave her the ring on a Sunday evening after service in the presence of the senior pastor and his wife who congratulated them.

‘ You made a good choice’ rev. Isaiah said to Chibuike

‘ She also dis choose wisely’ mama said

‘ We thank God for his mercies towards both of us’ Chibuike said

Rev. Isaiah prayed for them and advised them at length and at Chibuike’s request decided to only announce the engagement after he has been formally introduced to Homa’s parents .

Chibuike was nervous sitting beside Homa as they faced her parents. He had had little encounter with them but he knew that they were middle class people with well-defined goals. The couple were one of the new deacons the church had ordained recently.

‘Pastor Chibuike, you are welcome to my family and we have heard why you are here today’ the father replied after Chibuike had briefed him about the visit.

‘Thank you sir’

‘ Well, I am not against my daughter marrying a pastor but

will you be able to take care of her? The father asked  
'By God's grace ,yes sir' Chibuike replied  
'Hmmm, there won't be any waiver because you are a pastor oh. You will follow the marriage list' the wife said laughing  
' No problem ma. God will provide for us' Chibuike replied  
' Well, we have no objection to your union. Both of you are young and I believe you know what you want. You need to contact your people and start the proceedings when you are ready' the father said.  
'Sir, i am very ready to start the proceedings. I am looking at finishing everything in six months' time' Chibuike said  
' Okay, if you are sure'  
'And sir, if you don't mind, I will like to announce the engagement in church immediately after the marriage introduction'  
' You have my permission' Homa's father said.

Chibuike went home that day with joy. He was happy that he had passed the hurdle of meeting Homa's parents and it was favourable. The marriage list was sent to him the next Sunday through Homa so they could have a look before the both families met.

' Wow, this your people's list is something else' Chibuike laughed  
' It's not a lie oh' Homa said.  
'Now, I like pastor C, but we have to come up with endearing names for each other because we are going to be one soon' Chibuike said  
' You are funny . You that dresses like one deeper holier than thou brother ? She laughed  
' Forget about my dressing. You can be deceived oh. I think i will call you sweetie...'  
' Hahahaha, then I will call you honey' she said  
' Not bad'  
' Please let's look at the list before names abeg' Homa said

'It's not too much. I can handle it'  
' Really? With this your pastor allowance?  
' I have been here for more than a year and I don't spend anyhow. I have not bought clothes or food like that'  
' I know... I hope you won't wear one of these your ugly suits? Homa said  
' Don't worry, we will cross that bridge when we get there' he laughed  
' Ok... so they want to sell me judging from the content of the list...one cow. Two goats. Fifty tubers of yam, eighty crates of malt, thirty crates of soft drinks.....  
' Stop counting. I will pay all even if it means we won't eat after the wedding' Chibuike laughed again  
' You are not serious... is it a laughing matter? Homa laughed too  
' I will send for my parents. We should finish the introduction this month end. I can't wait any longer.  
' Are we going to stay in this apartment? Homa asked  
' Yes... do you mind? He asked  
' No... I don't mind for now. We can always move to a bigger apartment later. You know I will be going for youth service later this year too, so my allowee is going to come in handy' she said  
' Good wife . But don't worry ,God will provide'  
'Ok...let's pray then'  
'Yes my sweetie' he said and both of them laughed.

After the introduction which was an indoor affair in which pastor Chibuike and his family paid everything on the list, the family fixed a date for the traditional and church wedding with the consent of the intending couple. The date was fixed and the next Sunday, it was announced in church. This was exactly two months after the engagement day. The announcement met a lot of shouts and celebration.  
' This that is not up to two years in this church?'  
' This pastor is lucky marrying such a beautiful sister'

'I wonder what he saw in her. Adanne said to Ezinne at the close of service.

'I don't know and I thought he was into you?

' We didn't gel' Adanne was bitter but didn't show it. Pastor Chibuike was wicked to her' she had thought .That night at his house, she had been sure that he wanted to propose to her but maybe Homa was a witch.

Chibuike was in his office the next day when he heard a knock on his office and before he could answer,looked up to meet Mirabel's angry eyes.

' Deaconess, how are you? He said

' Pastor, are you so heartless? She said

' What happened?

'After all I invested in you. Buying you stuffs.....'

' Hey, hold on. I didn't promise you anything and I refused your gifts even though you insisted at first'

' You hurt my feelings' she said as she began to cry

' I am sorry but I never told you anything' he watched her cry and didn't make any attempt to touch her.

' I thought you like me. Instead you went for a girl that just started church here. Is it fair? She lamented.

Pastor Chibuike felt sorry for her but didn't know what to do. He had made his choice and as God lived. He knew he had made the right choice and nothing or no one will stop it. He heaved a sigh of relief when she finally left.

Yolanda heard the announcement with mixed feelings. She had been his first choice but she had turned him down.

Though she didn't like him, she felt bad that someone else had agreed to marry him.

'Yoyo babe, pastor don catch his own fish' Anita laughed

' Yeah, good for him Nah. I wish him luck' Yolanda replied

' She is quite beautiful. I wonder what she sees in him.

Anyway, one man's meat is another man's poison' Anita said.

'Yes. I can't wait for Jude to fix date for our introduction.

That is what is in my mind now not pastor C' Yolanda sighed.

' You have been engaged for almost a year now, still nothing. Meanwhile, pastor C had done introduction already and you will think he didn't have money' Anita replied.

' Maybe the parents or the church helped him. I know he is a poor pastor' Yolanda said laughing

' Well. I pity that girl. Maybe she will work after her youth service to help as well'

' I don't care. All I know is that I can't support any man. Any man that is ready to marry should be responsible enough to fully take care of me' Yolanda said

' Correct babe' Anita hailed

'Na WA for you oh' Yolanda laughed too.

The senior pastor and the elder's board coupled with the workers union had a meeting to plan for the upcoming wedding of pastor Chibuiké and sister Homachisom. Elder Ake who was the chairman of the planning committee sat at the large table to deliberate the plans for the wedding.

'Good evening everyone. You are welcome to this meeting' he started

'As we all know, our assistant pastor, pastor Chibuiké has been with us to close to two years now. He has been a dedicated and good leader and this is his wedding we are talking about. We need to give him our total support.

Surprisingly, he has paid for everything on the marriage list. All we need to focus on now is the white wedding that is just round the corner'

The people murmured and gave their input as the meeting progressed.

' I am going to give fifty thousand naira towards the wedding perhaps to get them a more decent accommodation. As a father, I can't envision my daughter starting life in a small apartment like his' he laughed

By the end of the meeting, they had raised two hundred thousand to be given to pastor Chibuiké to support his wedding. After the meeting, pastor Chibuiké met elder Ake

and thanked him for the support.

‘ No problem. I will have done more but I am having some business challenge’ elder Ake said

‘Is there anything I can help with’ Chibuike asked

‘ Not at all... I have been trying to connect with the MD of the new company in town’ he frowned

‘ Oh. The new company about to start in the town soon?

‘Yes. I have tried several times to meet the MD and get some supply contracts but to no avail. I wonder who he is. Anyway, don’t mind me, you have a wedding to plan for’ elder Ake said as he packed his bible to leave.

‘ Thanks again for the support’ Chibuike said

‘We thank God. I hope you are doing the right thing though. Marriage nowadays is something else. See, Antonia that married just the other day.....’ elder Ake shook his head

‘ What’s wrong sir? Is there anything I can help with?

‘ If you are not so busy with your marriage plans, I would have liked for you to have a talk with her’ elder Ake sighed

‘ I will make out time to see her whenever she is in town’ Chibuike said

‘She is in my house right now as we speak’ elder had a sad look in his eyes.

‘ What ? Maybe I can just go with you now’

Antonia was by the pool area in a bum short and small t-shirt reading a book. When pastor Chibuike was ushered into the house, she frowned deeply when she saw him walking towards her.

‘Good evening pastor, what are you doing here?

‘Good evening, what is the matter’ Chibuike asked

‘ Nothing. Did my father tell you anything?

‘ No. but that I could be able to help you with whatever is bothering you’

‘ You can’t help me pastor. I have made up my mind. I am not going back to henry’ she said

‘What. Why? You are barely a year old in marriage’ Chibuike

said

'Who cares? He is cheat, he goes after everything in a skirt and I regret the marriage' Antonia said

Chibuike was worried when he left her .he had not been able to convince her to return to her matrimonial home. He had assured the father that things will get better after praying with him but he was not fully convinced.

Homa was waiting at the front of the bridal shop when Chibuike was dropped off in a red Toyota Camry. He looked different in his blue jeans and black t-shirt. She had never seen him dress so casual and told him so.

'I am actually coming from an important meeting and not from the church. And that was one of my friends that dropped me off just now' he answered

'I didn't know you have friends like that' she said

'Hmmm, well you will soon get to know some of them' he laughed

'Ok. You need to dress like this more ,not those your funny oversize suits' Homa laughed too

'Ok, honey' he teased

They walked into the bridal shop and began to have a look at the designs .Homa had several dresses in mind and all fitted her perfectly but she had to choose one.

'I think I will go with this' she decided

'Why this one, why not that one? Asked Chibuike

'The cost of that one is too much'

'What do you mean by that? Chibuike asked

'I am going to pay for my own dress as my own contribution to the wedding' Homa said

'No, I can't allow that. I will pay' Chibuike insisted

'Please allow me to do this' Homa pleaded

'Ok.....' Chibuike agreed after much agreement

'Thanks. One hundred thousand will not kill me' laughed

Homa

'How much is the other one?Chibuike asked pointing at one of the dressed Homa had liked

' Three hundred and fifty thousand naira' she said looking at the price tag.

'hmmm., what about that other one ? Chibuike asked pointing to the finest gown that Homa had tried at first'

'Don't even go there. It's almost a million though it comes with a bag and those designers shoes'

'It's not bad, is it? Chibuike said smiling

'That money is enough to take care of other needs we will have... so let's cut our coat according to our size' she laughed.

Ok, honey. You are a good girl'

' You know that you are not supposed to see me in my wedding dress until that day' Homa said

' Forget those superstitious beliefs. After all ,you insisted on seeing my wedding suit'

' That is non-negotiable. I have to see what you intend to wear' they both laughed.



It was the wedding day. Homa was awake before five am and she couldn't wait to start the day. Everything was set and ready and she could not wait to see Chibuike. The past months had revealed a lot about him. She had come to realize that he had more class than he portrayed. He had shown her the wedding rings and she had marvelled at the sight of the stones.

' This is going to be very expensive, how did you pay for them?

' Remember I have church support and some of my friends in high places as well' he replied

' Couldn't you have bought something cheaper like the ones we tested in that Jewry shop? Homa complained,

' Don't worry. This will last us well and we don't need to start replacing it soon. God will take care of all our needs. Don't forget Philippians 4.19'

Homa had not seen him since three days before the wedding. He had gone to his family house to prepare for the wedding according to him but they had talked on phone every minute since then.

Homa took her bath quickly and waited for the makeup artist to start 'her' thing while going through her routine for the wedding celebration.

' Homa, you have a parcel' one of her maids of honour said entering the room carrying an exquisitely wrapped package.

' Wow. Early wedding present? Homa was amazed

'Maybe. Why don't you open it?

Homa opened the parcel carefully and stared in surprise looking at the same elaborate and beautiful wedding dress that she had seen at the bridal shop. She held up the dress and a note fell out.

'My love, please wear this for our wedding. I will explain later.....from your honey

' Is it from pastor C? The girl asked with excitement in her voice.

' Who else is my honey? Homa asked still in a daze  
The wedding dress fitted Homa perfectly and it was a sight to behold. The sequence in the hem of the skirt glittered like real diamonds. The top of the dress was made of stained diamonds in its entirety. The veil had a fitted crown that glittered. It was clear that they had added new features to the original dress but it was too beautiful for her' Homa thought with tears running down her cheek.

' Thank God, they have not done your make up,else you will have spoilt it' the girl said.

Homa looked like a princess when she stepped out. The accompanying shoes added glamour and grace to her as she walked out of the house with her bridal trains that had new outfits altogether different to what they had purchased. Homa nearly tripped when she came of the house . The kind of cars she saw was not what they had planned. Elder Ake had released one of his suv cars to take Homa to the church and that was what she was expecting but everything had changed like a fairy tale. A well-dressed chauffeur beckoned to her to enter the well decorated limousine.

'What is going on here? Homa asked

'I am at your service ma'

'Who sent you?

'My chief ma'

'Who is your chief. Are you sure you are at the right place?

Homa's father asked. He was as surprised as everyone.

" Mr Daniel Chibuike is my chief'

' What?' Homa didn't finish before her phone rang

' Pastor C, what is going on? Homa asked

' I will explain later, just come to the church first'

The wedding venue was filled to capacity. Chibuike waited anxiously in one of the exotic cars for Homa. Today was the day he had waited for all his life and he thanked God that he had found the perfect one. His family and friends were already inside the church. He breathed a sigh of happiness

when he saw Homa and her entourage drive in.

Homa walked like a princess with her bridesmaids to the entrance of the church. Everywhere was full and she had seen her parents alighting from another exotic car making their way into the church.

The whole church stood up as Homa marched into the church. She spied her in-laws, her family members and church members. Rev. Isaiah was at the pulpit and she was amazed to see rev. Aluya and his wife too but she had her sight only on the figure of pastor Chibuiké in suit in front of the altar waiting for her. As she got closer, pastor Chibuiké turned and Homa was shocked to see a totally different pastor C.

Pastor Chibuiké wore a dazzling well fitted tuxedo with matching bow tie and pocket handkerchief. His shoes glittered from afar and his face glowed with well-trimmed beard and cut hair. His otherwise bushy beards and hair were well lined bringing out the square well defined masculine face that no longer held any glasses. He looked totally different and Homa drew back in shock at the new and improved pastor C that greeted her with a kind smile. His eyes that had always been hidden behind huge frames shone with an adoring look at her. Mesmerized by the pull of his eyes, she matched towards him with a lot of unanswered questions in her heart.

Homa was not the only person surprised at the wedding.

The whole church had marvelled at the sight of pastor C and the opulent theme of the wedding. They had been surprised by rev. Aluya's presence and the magnitude and carriage of most of the wedding guests. The wedding had become like a fairy tale suddenly with the glamour displayed.

Yolanda felt uncomfortable watching the proceedings. She had barely recognised pastor c when he made his entrance and Homa's gown had further added to her discomfort as well. The gown smelt money and it seemed she had missed something in her life. As the couple exchanged rings, she

berated herself and wondered if she had not made a costly mistake.

'With this ring, I wed thee' pastor C smiled as he slid the diamond ring on Homa's finger. The sun kissed the ring as it radiated on her finger.

Rev. Aluya joined the couple with a lot of prayers and admonition.

'Pastor Daniel Chibuiké is like a son to me. When he told me that he had found a wife, I was glad that he had chosen wisely. Pastor Chibuiké is one of the best and a son to my friend, a long time pastor and financier of the church.'

Rev. Isaiah addressed the church after the joining of the couple too.

'The reception will hold at the le meridian hotel as against the original plan of having it in the church'

'What' the people exclaimed

'Well, as you can see, things have changed and I will like to introduce you to the newest couple in town... Engr. and Mrs Daniel Chibuiké; he called out

' What'

'What is going on here? Homa asked

' I will explain soon' Chibuiké smiled

Elder Ake had seen several faces he thought he knew. He had moved quickly after the wedding towards a man in a grey suit with dark shades on. He knew him and he could not pass over the opportunity to chat him up.

' Hello Mr Chike' elder called the man as he made to enter one of the jeeps parked by the church.

'Oh,, chief Ake, what a coincidence. Are you a member of this church? Mr Chike asked him

'Yes. Are you a guest ?

' Yes, a guest of the MD' chike smiled

' Your MD is here? The same MD that I have been trying to get in touch with? Elder Ake asked

'Yes'

'Please can you kindly introduce us please. I beg you' elder Ake begged

' I don't think it will be proper. He will be extremely busy. Maybe another time'

'Ok. Can you at least tell me who he is?

' You should know him already. He is your assistant pastor, Engr. Daniel... I thought I told you before?

' No...yes you did. You said Engr. Daniel... wait ..Is it the same pastor Daniel Chibuike you are talking about?

' Yes of course'

'Oh my gosh... pastor Chibuike is the same person as the Engr. Daniel you have been talking about? You mean I have been seeing the MD all this while and I didn't know? I am done for ' elder Ake walked slowly to his car where his family was waiting for him.

'Daddy, what is wrong? We will miss the reception' Anita said

' We have missed more than the reception' he lamented

' Sweetheart, what is the problem? The wife asked

' Do you know that pastor Chibuike is filthy rich? Elder Ake said finally

' What? Asked Yolanda

' What do you mean daddy? Anita said

'Pastor Chibuike is the MD of that new company in town that I have been trying to meet for more than a year now'

'I don't believe it' shouted Yolanda

'You better believe it. I just met his GM'

' How possible is it? Yolanda muttered. Now she was angry and sad. She looked at the ring on her finger and sighed heavily. This latest discovery would explain the change in pastor C and the glamour they had all witnessed. Yolanda silently removed the ring from her finger and tossed it into her bag. It was as worthless as her life at the moment. Homa was dumfounded at the display of wealth that met her eyes. They had stopped at the hotel wedding suite while they got ready for the reception. She had never enjoyed

such luxurious treatment in her life before and she quickly began the third degree questioning on pastor Chibuike immediately they were alone.

‘So what is going on? I am confessed’ she said

‘What do you want to know? He laughed.

‘ Everything. You were introduced as an Engr. in church. Are you not a pastor?

‘ I am a pastor and also an engr. I am a business man and I am not poor’ he said

‘ I still don’t understand’

‘ It is a long story and I will tell you after our thanksgiving tomorrow’

‘ I can’t wait but I am pleasantly surprised’

Adanne and Ezinne were among the ladies that had attended the reception party. Mirabel could not explain the sudden change in the assistant pastor either. She had seen the display of food and drinks and the kind of wedding guests and the gifts had finally convinced her that pastor Chibuike was not what or whom he had portrayed. Her banking instinct had pushed into a spontaneous investigation to discover that he was a business mogul.

‘ How could I have missed this’ she berated herself

‘Adanne, this is serious. So pastor Chibuike moves with such class’ Ezinne said

Adanne was mortified. She had foolishly spoilt things for herself by being too forward and wayward. She had tears in her eyes looking at Homa shine. To think that she had barely been in church for two years but had caught a big fish was disheartening to Adanne.

The groom’s friend Mr Eze took the toast for the new couple and they cheered as he spoke.

‘ pastor Daniel is a bosom friend and a business partner that I have known for years and when he told me of his secret mission to get a wife, I didn’t agree with his method but today, I have come to realize that he is a focused man and

has finally achieved what he had set out to do three years ago.'...

The wedding reception came to an end with the announcement that thanksgiving will be held in the church by 9am in the morning. The groom, pastor Chibuike gave the vote of thanks as he smiled lovingly at his new bride who herself wondered how she had gotten such a wonderful husband.

Homa's parents were awestruck at the turn of events. Pastor Chibuike had invited both his parents and Homa's family members to accompany them to their residence for a small get together. They had been taken to a completely different place than they thought. It was a new suburb close to the church with a small duplex in a big space. Some canopies had been arranged around a small swimming pool with music playing softly.

'And where is this? Homa asked

'This is our home'

'You are kidding? She gushed

'I kid not' he smiled

Pastor Chibuike carried his new bride into the threshold as she laughed in joy. He had loved the house six months ago when he saw the place for the first time. He had made some renovations with the help of chike and apart from a slight emergency, he had not spent much time supervising.

'You are something else. You mean you have been pretending to be who you were not all this time? She asked

'Not really.. I am still a pastor but most people judge a book by its cover you know? I wanted to be sure about what people think about me...'

'Hmm, how interesting.. How did you manage to pull it off?

'Story for another time. Let me show you your new house.

Do you like it?

'Absolutely'

Homa loved everything about the house. The kitchen

thrilled her so much that she felt like cooking immediately  
'Not yet. We have to go for our honeymoon first' Chibuike laughed

' We don't need honeymoon with this kind of big house to ourselves'

' Not in your life. Honeymoon is done and dusted already. We are leaving immediately after thanksgiving tomorrow'

' I hope I am not dreaming. Three days ago, everything seemed normal..Today, I am in a dream' Homa said

' This is real honey. See your ring, its reality and the best is yet to come. Come let's see our rooms'

The master bedroom was furnished to taste and the wardrobe held clothes and accessories already. Shoes and bags filled the spaces both for him and her.

'Who owns all these? Homa asked

' You and me... you used to think that I need a makeover. Now you know that I don't' he laughed again

'I can see that' she answered slowly

Homa was still in a daze. How could she have known that pastor Chibuike was rich? He had completely fooled all of them. She walked through the clothes and foot wears amazed at the worth and class of each item. She was overwhelmed that she sat down heavily on the bed and wept.

'I thought that I needed to change you but it was the other way round... I am a fool, please forgive me... truly, the ways of God are different from the ways of men...how could I have been so short-sighted?'

'Hush hush, God loves you and wants the best for us always' That night, they held their hands and dedicated their marriage to God.

The Thanksgiving Day in church was a day to remember in Great Grace Cathedral. As usual, rev. Aluya was in attendance with his wife and some other invited pastors who had come to grace the occasion. Rev. Isaiah and his



wife looked different in new piece of suits that smelled money. The two church pianists were in church and the choir looked replenished in new choir robes. The whole church smelt and looked different as the congregation looked expectantly for the newlyweds to appear.

The church applauded at the sight of pastor Chibuiké and Homachisom. They looked radiant in a pair of matching outfits led down the aisle by a couple of friends in uniform too.

Rev. Aluya called them out for the thanksgiving and as they danced out, the congregation joined in. pastor Chibuiké took the mic and addressed the church after singing a short song.

‘I am grateful to God for giving me this wonderful wife and today is a day we will live to remember .....’ he said

Rev. Aluya took over the mic after the talk and made few announcements.

‘Also today, pastor Chibuiké will be unveiling the new company and dedicating it to God’

‘So immediately after the church service, some persons will accompany the pastors to the new site for formal prayers and dedication.. This is to also inform you that some of the church youths have been given instant employment already’

There were loud shouts of approval among the audience at these announcements.

Homa was surprised at the magnitude of the company. She had heard about a new company coming to town but never in her widest imagination could she have guessed that her husband would be the MD. The whole church had accompanied them to the site for the unveiling. Rev. Aluya prayed over the fence of the building and when the big sign post bearing the name of the company was unveiled, the people clapped.

‘We dedicate this company ...CHIOMA GROUP OF

COMPANIES to the glory of God in the name of the father ,son and Holy Ghost and let the people of God say....  
'AMEN' everyone chorused.

'Pastor, I am overwhelmed by your generosity' scorpion walked towards pastor Chibuike with Eric the church pianist. They had been employed by pastor Chibuike's company as well .

' Now, I hope to see you regularly in church' he said

'Pastor,no wahala. If I had known that you were the owner of that company, I will have started church with Eric since the day you came for that follow up' scorpion replied

' Well, I will see you after my honeymoon guys' pastor C said walking towards the waiting car.

'Hem... pastor..Can I have a word with you sir? It was elder Ake running after the couple with streaks of sweat on his brow.

'Oh elder. What's the problem?

' I am very sorry for the way I treated you some while ago....i didn't know that you were the MD of the new company'

' Well, don't judge a book by its cover. I wanted to marry Yolanda but I guess God did not approve it.... Anyway, I have already forgiven you and forgotten that...'

' Thank you very much sir'

Pastor Chibuike watched him go as more people tried to speak with him. He could see the frustration on the face of his new wife already but deaconess Mirabel was not taking no for an answer.

' Pastor Sir, may I see you when you are back? Strictly for business' she said. At least, she had to gain something too.

' Ok, no problem. I promise that you can see me when I come back'

Homa could not believe her eyes the numerous people and employees flocking around her husband. She was going to make him tell her everything as soon as they get to their

destination, she vowed to herself. She entered the waiting car with pastor Chibuike as they speed up to catch their flight to Seychelles.

Lying flat on their backs in the beach beds with sun glasses on their faces, the couple relaxed. They watched the blue silent waters and took in fresh sweet smelling air that the sea carried to them. Homa adjusted her wide rimmed that protected her face from the sun and took a sip of the glass of iced chapman beside her. She glanced at her husband beside and he seemed asleep.

'My love, are you asleep? She asked

'No.. What's up? He replied lazily

They had spent two nights already and they still had twelve more days to go. The beach was heavenly and Homa had not seen sand as white as the ones on the seashore before. Their rooms overlooked the beach and it was a great delight to wake up to the soothing early morning sun. It still felt like a dream to her waking up each morning to the smell and feel of her husband.

'Pastor, my love....'she laughed

'Yes honey?

'You promised to tell me all about your secret mission or whatever you call it' she said.

He had told her to enjoy the honeymoon until he was prepared to divulge the mystery of his mission to Great Grace Cathedral.

' You like stories , I see' he smiled

' I am still dazed but pleasantly so. So tell me , why did you choose Rumigbo of all places?

' Hmmm. I will say that it was divine. Maybe God knew that you will be there at that time?

' Hmmm..So what really happened?

' You see, I had a new company to set up in the area. I actually needed a good site for my company and rev. Aluya our family friend also our pastor recommended the area.

' Really?

'Yes. And then my parents were at that time on my back to settle down and get married too. I had been away from home a lot pursuing business and not having time for relationships'

'You mean you have not been in any relationship?

' Not serious ones dues to my constant travels. Anyway, I decided to take two years off by accepting the position of assistant pastor which rev. Aluya actually created because of me. So you know the rest' Chibuike said

' So you are not really a pastor?

' I am. I have always loved God and have served him from my youth. I was ordained a pastor few years ago at the headquarters church but I enjoyed mission work and of course music.'

'So why did you choose to pretend that you were poor and your dressing?

'Yeah. It was deliberate. In the headquarters church, a lot of girls were always falling for me and the attention was quite distracting and annoying seeing that I was not ready yet and most of them knew my parents and knew that we were rich. I wanted a girl that loved me for myself not what I have'

' Hmmm. Those your glasses were really ugly'

'So why did you agree then?

' I just felt a stirring in my heart for you and I was very sure you were the one though I had it in my heart to change your appearance after we marry'

' That was Dangerous. You really can't change a person'

' Well thank God you are changed now'

' well, I decided to stay in the parsonage to also give my best while observing the ladies and I must say that I saw and met quite a few' he laughed

' But how were you overseeing your company and how did you keep it a secret. Did rev. Isaiah know?

' Rev. Isaiah knew during that time that the church

generator was stolen. I gave him a cheque for a brand new one and I had to explain in confidence my mission and he supported me. His wife ..God bless her , is an angel also helped to keep my secret'

' So she knew all that time I was with her?

'Yes'

'What?

'Yes oh. My friend chike helped in keeping the new company afloat. He would call me when there was only an emergency which was rare'

'Wow, you are supposed to be a detective' she laughed out loud

'You are right but I am glad that I didn't make a mistake. Now, I can concentrate on serving God and doing my business without any more distractions'

'So what's the plan because I really didn't know that our original plan will change suddenly. I had thought that we would stay at the church and maybe move after my youth service. I even thought you would still be working at eh church. Now I don't know....'

'Relax, things are already sorted out. You will do your youth service in our company...remember it's our company now... CHIOMA a combination of Chibuike and Homa...We already have a house to stay and both of us will still be serving God in the church. Isn't it perfect?'

Homa nodded slowly. It was indeed a perfect plan and she had nothing to do with it but God. She remembered what Jeremiah 29,11 said....your ways are not my ways says the lord. His plans for us are good and not evil, to give us a future and a hope....

' God is a perfect planner' Homa finally said

' You can't beat him in that' Chibuike added

'That's totally true, pastor C my love' Homa laughed

' So you still want to call me pastor C? He said with a small frown.

'I love the sound of it but don't worry, you are still....my

love' she embraced his face with her palm planting a kiss on his lips.

'Where are you going honey?

'Come and catch me' she replied running away bare footed on the soft sand towards the sea. Pastor Chibuike stood up quickly and ran towards his wife trying to catch her. The sea caught up with the couple as they ran into it and it was clear that the real honeymoon was about to start.