



GBEMI

GBEMI

GBEMI

Copyright © 2018 EMMANUELA EVBUOMA

ISBN: 978-978

All Rights Reserved No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission from the author.

Printed in Nigeria by: CITIZENSprints P.O. Box 2451, Dugbe, Ibadan,
Nigeria Tel: 0803 406 5751, 0805 606 3133 E-mail: andrew_ewhro@yahoo.com

Published by

For Further Information and Enquiry Please contact: Emmanuela Ifeoluwa

Evbuoma Email Address: emmanuelaevb@gmail.com

Phone: 08149976702

Facebook: Emmanuela Evbuoma

Instagram: ellaevb

Twitter: eevbuoma

www.victorypath.com

DEDICATION

To all 'Gbemis' out there. God's love for you is immeasurable.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With a heart full of gratitude, I say a very big thank you to my heavenly Father who inspired me to write this story and led me to publish it as a book.

I thank also my parents; Dr and Dr (Mrs) Evbuoma who supported me from cradle till date. My amazing siblings and friends who were never tired of listening to me read my stories to them and who corrected me whenever they saw faults. Flora O'Seyi Dairo, thank you for making me believe this book is a possibility and following it up till it became a reality.

I appreciate all the followers of Gbemi and all my other stories on the blog, *the Victory Path*, your comments are always a source of encouragement to me.

A big thank you to Goodness Adegbola for taking the time to read through and edit, to Victory Odunjo my partner in blogging and of course to Joshua Mike-Bamiloye (Jaymikee) who did the cover design. I could not have asked for a better design.

Finally, I say a very big thank you to my love, my heartthrob and soon to be husband, Damilola Mike-Bamiloye. His encouragement and support were mind blowing. He was the first to read through every chapter before each was posted on

GBEMI

the blog and made his inputs. I'm grateful to God for blessing me with my personal coach, teacher and mentor.

COMMENTS ABOUT GBEMI FROM THE BLOG

(VICTORY PATH)

"Gbemi is a treat for anyone who appreciates love and the reality of finding something true irrespective of the challenges in the way. The story is weaved around the key values of family, friendship, love, discipline, forgiveness and an understanding of God's love. You created an absolute masterpiece. One won't forget this story in a hurry!"-Victory Odunjo

"I have been blessed tremendously reading this story, the Lord has used you through this story to touch that part of my life that needs healing and freedom. I am letting go of every pain that my past brought and I chose to continue to live for Christ."- Gbemi

"This is such a great story. I was very blessed. It opened my eyes to lot of things. God bless you. May He continue to increase your wisdom. Forgiveness is key to being successful in life and one needs the Holy Spirit at all times and in decision making, no matter how little the decision is."- Damilola

"God bless you for this story. I really did not want it to end at all. Thank you for this and I really mean it. I learnt that whatever you did in your past doesn't matter to God if He wants to elevate you and if you are willing to be used by Him. I *sha*

GBEMI

pray my future husband is a man like John, lol. Thank you for using this website (blog) as a way to minister unto people. Can't wait to read more stories of yours.”-

Ruth

“A very beautiful story. Truly the past can't be changed but in what way we let it affect us is entirely left to us. It was a great read.”- Tunde

“You are really gifted and talented. I pray that God will continue to feed you with more ideas and Inspiration. I literally read all the stories in Emma's corner in one night. Thank you so much. I learnt a lot.”-Emem Bob

“This is really nice and inspiring and I like the way you preach in between and explain some things. What a beautiful story.”- Precious

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	4
Acknowledgement	5
Comments about Gbemi from the Blog (Victory Path)	7
Chapter 1	11
Chapter 2	23
Chapter 3	35
Chapter 4	55
Chapter 5	66
Chapter 6	76
Chapter 7	94
Chapter 8	120
Chapter 9	146

GBEMI

This novel, Gbemi is a work of fiction.

Names, characters, events and incidents are the products of the author's
imagination.

Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely
coincidental.

CHAPTER 1

Gbemisola woke up that cool August Monday morning with a strange feeling. She knew it had to do with work but couldn't tell exactly what it was. She worked as the personal assistant to the managing director of Fando Oil, an oil and gas company in Lagos. She had been working there for the past six months and had never for once resented her job not even on the worst of days. She was dedicated to her job and this was evident in the die-hard commitment and tireless effort she pumped in on a continual basis. There were a few things she really loved, and her job was one of them. But that morning, for reasons she could not explain, she sensed something huge coming her way but couldn't place a finger on what exactly it was.

It was 4:55AM, her 5:00AM alarm had not even rung, yet her eyes were wide open. She stretched her hand for the dangling switch beside her bed and turned on the light which illuminated her neatly arranged pink floral themed room. Her 6 x 4" bed was located at one corner. To its right, a few inches away from the foot of the bed was a table and chair which doubled as her work desk anytime she brought work from the office and her sewing table where she cut fabric and drew up her designs. Her sewing machine was just beside it, she sewed most of her traditional attire and a few of her official dresses which were hung neatly in the in-

GBEMI

built wardrobe across from the bed and on one of the doors of the wardrobe was a full length mirror she loved looking at before stepping out. She made sure she always looked good. She also sewed for people whenever she had the time. Sewing was one her passions, others were cooking, graphic designing and reading. She wasn't really a social person and liked to keep to herself but Favour, her best friend always knew how to bring out her social side.

Favour had come visiting, she spent the weekend and was due to return to Ibadan where she lived, that morning. She slept in the other room of Gbemi's two bedroom flat. Gbemi remembered she had to leave the house earlier in order to drop Favour at the park and at the same time avoid the terrible Lagos traffic. She sat up in bed to pray, reached out for her Bible and devotional which were on the bedside drawer. She spent the next forty minutes having her quiet time.

"Gbemi, are you ready?" Favour shouted from the sitting room as she dragged her black portable travelling bag after her. Favour was the outgoing type, a total contrast to Gbemi who was much more reserved. You know what they say about unlike poles and attraction.

She didn't get a response from Gbemi who was dressing up and bobbing her head to the Nathaniel Bassey music coming from her laptop.

“This girl is going to be late for work at the rate at which she is going,” Favour said to herself as she left her box in the sitting room and walked past the dining to Gbemi’s room.

Without knocking, she barged into the room “Babe *how far you na?*”
(What’s up with you?)

“Good morning to you too, my night was blessed, thanks for asking” Gbemi replied focused on her reflection in the mirror as she applied her pink lipstick without looking at Favour.

“Who your good morning *help?* Aren’t you checking the time or do you have another means of transportation I don’t know about aside your car?” Favour was always blunt but this time around was also concerned about her friend getting to work in good time.

“*Ehn* now, don’t you know I got a jet yesterday?” Gbemi said sarcastically as she shut down her laptop and packed it into her laptop bag. “*Oya* (Okay) I’m ready, let somebody hear word,” she smiled and added “you look good by the way.”

“Duh, I always do.” Favour gave a naughty grin. She was about the same height as Gbemi and coincidentally, same size. This afforded them the opportunity of possessing each other’s clothes, an opportunity Favour was grateful for, as she

was always quick to search Gbemi's wardrobe and pick whatever dress caught her fancy.

“You are just a proud *somebody* (person). Let's go before you start shouting again. It's 6:10, we'll make it in time, ” she said as she sprayed her Escada perfume behind her ears.

“*Shey* you will not give me perfume *ni?*” (Won't you give me perfume?). Favour knew how best to get to her friend. She many times wasn't direct when she wanted something from her.

“Did you ask? You think I don't know you used it when we went out yesterday. Just take and let me have peace.” She extended her hand to her and added “just two puffs o, before you finish it for me.”

“It's not your fault” Favour tried playing on Gbemi's psychology. “It's me that is asking you” she was about to spray a fourth time when Gbemi snatched it from her.

“Finish it, you hear?”

“Whatever” she waved her hand in the air. “Gbemi, I like this your top o.” Favour knew where she was heading with that compliment.

“Thanks dear, I like it too.” Gbemi knew her friend too well.

“Don’t you think it would look great on me?” She smiled mischievously.

“Nah... not as great as it looks on me. The brown gown you took yesterday is enough for the visit. I’ll think of what else I can give you when next you come.”

“*Ehen* so that’s how it is now. You are using clothe as an incentive for me to visit you.”

Gbemi burst into laughter. “I didn’t even see it that way, but yeah that too should work. I know how much you like clothes.” She was set to leave now.

“It’s okay o, there is God” She stepped out of the room as Gbemi followed her behind carrying her handbag and laptop bag, one on each shoulder.

They said a short word of prayer in the sitting room and left.

Just as they stepped into the passage that joined Gbemi’s flat with her neighbour’s, the main door of her neighbour’s flat was opened. All she knew about the man who lived opposite her was that he was hardly home. She had seen him a couple of times since she moved in some five months ago and greeted him anytime their paths crossed. She was still locking the door of her flat when she heard Favour talking to the handsome young man in a black suit.

“Hi, my name is Favour. I’m Gbemi’s very good friend,” she was the most outspoken person Gbemi had ever met.

GBEMI

“Oh, nice to meet you.” He stretched his hand for a handshake “I’m Gbenga” then he looked at Gbemi and said “I never knew your name” as he shook her.

“Gbemi.” She didn’t seem interested in a lengthy conversation.

“It’s really nice to meet you, Gbemi” he called her name softly. Without mincing words, he added “I’m looking forward to knowing more than just your name.”

Gbemi smiled but Favour knew her too much to be deceived by her fake grin.

“I’m sure she will be glad too” Favour, knowing her friend, had doubts about that. “We have to get going; it was nice meeting you Gbenga”. She hit Gbemi with her elbow lightly and through clenched teeth whispered “Babes won’t you say anything?”

“Bye Mr Gbenga” she gave a wave and led the way while Favour followed behind.

“Alright, bye. Have a great day.” He waved back and watched them leave.

When they got to the car, Favour was the first to speak. “Why were you so cold towards the guy?”

“How was I cold?” Gbemi asked with only little interest in the conversation as she reversed out of the car park.

“With this unwelcoming attitude, I only wonder how you want to get a man in your life.” Favour poured out her concern.

“And who said anything about me needing a man in my life? My life is fine the way it is.” She was obviously getting upset and defensive.

“I’ve told you times without number to stop talking like that. I’m not asking you to jump on the next available dude that walks into your life but we both know you aren’t getting any younger. My husband has tried introducing some of his friends to you but you are never interested.” She threw her hands in the air.

“Favour, the fact that you and Emmanuel are happily married doesn’t mean that is the path everyone is meant to take” She gave her a quick sideways glance.

She sighed, “If I say I’m not tired of going round circles on this matter, I’d be lying. I just pray you’ll snap out of whatever is wrong with you.”

“And I’ve told you times without number that I am fine. Thanks for your concern.” She snapped.

“Fine!”

“Fine!”

There was silence. Gbemi knew Favour was just being a concerned friend and so she struggled with the Holy Spirit who kept telling her to apologize. After five long, quiet and awkward minutes, Gbemi broke the silence.

“I’m sorry for going off on you. I know you care and I really appreciate it. I just don’t want to talk about this again.”

“No problem, I won’t bring it up again.”

“Plus the guy appears to be too forward. What’s the meaning of ‘I’m looking forward to knowing just more than your name’?” Gbemi mimicked him, raising her chin and gesticulating with the hand that was off the steering wheel.

The expression on her face was hilarious. Favour couldn’t hold back her laughter. “*Free the guy jo* (let the guy be), you know guys will always be guys more so, which guy in his right senses, will see such a pretty lady and won’t want to know more than just her name.” She dropped finger quotes around the last few words of her statement.

Gbemi smiled. “Thanks for coming over to spend the weekend and thank your husband for me too. You made my weekend.”

“Well it’s not as if I like seeing your face. I just needed a change of environment.” Favour teased with a smile.

“Yeah right, keep on deceiving yourself.” Gbemi brought the car to a halt as they got to the park. “Thank you for always being there,” they hugged each other.

“You are always welcome dear.” Favour came down and picked her box from the boot.

Gbemi waited for her to enter the bus before leaving. “Call me when you get to Ibadan,” she waved at her and waited for her friend to be seated in the bus before she left.

As she drove to work, she couldn't but ponder on what Favour had said. She knew she was right but she just wasn't willing to give it a try. She had her reasons and although she had never shared them with anyone, she was convinced beyond reasonable doubt that she had every reason to lock men out of her life.

She turned on the radio in the car to take her mind off it.

“Baby you know I love you and can't live without you” a male voice from the radio said. “I love you too dear” a female cooed in response.

Gbemi rolled her eyes in disgust, with a USB cord, she connected her phone to the car stereo and listened to music from her phone. Her songs were 99 percent gospel. The first song that played was ‘Carry Go’ by Jaymikee. In another 20 minutes, she was at work. She got down from the car, carrying her bags. She

walked quickly into the cream coloured duplex. She had about five minutes before work officially began at 8AM.

She still had that strange feeling she woke up with. She sensed something unusual was coming her way. She greeted the receptionist as she signed in and climbed up the stairs to her office which led into the MD's. She got to her desk, placed her bags on the table and said a word of prayer before setting up. As she was doing that, the intercom rang. She picked it. It was her boss.

“Miss Johnson, please come to my office” Mr Kalejaye said. He was a workaholic. He got to work earlier than everyone and was the last to leave. Gbemi always wondered if he ever spent time with his family. He came to work on weekends and didn't go to church on Sundays. There was almost nothing fun or social about him.

Gbemi did a quick mental check to ensure there was no pending task and to know if her boss had any appointment that morning but could not think of any reason for his summoning her. She immediately got up and walked toward the door of his office.

She knocked and waited for his response.

“Come in.” She heard the distant voice from within his office.

She opened the door and after taking a few steps greeted “Good morning sir.”

“How are you? Miss Johnson” he said without looking up from his laptop where he was working.

“I’m fine, thank you, sir.” Gbemi always composed herself properly before her boss and colleagues at work.

“Clear my schedule for next week and book me a return ticket to South Africa. I have a meeting with an energy company there. There is a possible deal brewing.”

“Ok sir, I will do that right away.” She turned around to leave.

“You’ll be booking for two.” He said still focused on his laptop.

“Oh Okay, Mr Bamidele will be joining you?” She asked wondering if the Project Manager, who joined him on his last business trip will be joining him this time around.

“No. You’ll be going with me.” He looked at her briefly and then continued his work.

Gbemi was shocked to the bones. Her legs became too heavy to move. She stood there dazed. Her face couldn’t hide her dismay.

When he noticed he didn't get a response from her, he looked at her again. "Or do you have a problem with that?" This time around, he removed his glasses and waited to hear what she had to say.

"No...no sir." She stammered. She obviously was not comfortable with the idea of travelling out of the country alone with him. She had heard rumours of him being a womanizer. She already projected that they would be lodged in the same hotel for close to a week. She was really concerned and didn't realize she was standing speechless in front her boss. His deep rumbling voice jerked her back to reality.

"You may go."

She left his office wondering what on earth she was going to do. "*Was this the reason for the strange feeling I woke up with this morning?*" She thought as she walked slowly to her desk. It was bad enough that she didn't see a need for a man in her life. Now, she was going to be 'trapped' with a womanizer who unfortunately for her doubled as her boss.

She sat on her chair, bowed her head and said a short prayer, "Lord please, you just have to help me."

CHAPTER 2

She had a long day at work. She left the office terribly exhausted. The traffic she battled with on her way home only made matters worse. As she drove into the car park around 8:45PM, she wondered what she was going to eat.

“I’ll microwave the jollof rice in the freezer” she thought to herself. She earnestly longed to get to her house, have a warm shower and hit the bed.

She plodded to the second floor which housed her flat. She shared the floor with Gbenga. Heading straight to her room, she changed her dress and entered the kitchen to fix herself dinner but was repelled by an awful smell.

“Oh no, I thought I took out the trash last night.” She said aloud as she covered her nose with one hand and placed the rice in the microwave to start warming. She thereafter picked the trash bag and passed the kitchen door downstairs. As she walked towards the main dustbin downstairs, a car drove into the car park. Gbemi was too tired to be concerned about who it was. She continued walking towards the dust bin, her mind still on her bed.

The person who drove in parked the car and in no time was out. A masculine voice from the direction of the car brought Gbemi’s mind back. “Gbemi, right?”

GBEMI

He pointed a finger at her and waited for her to turn around. He had seen an opportunity to say hi to her and quickly seized it.

Gbemi didn't initially recognize the voice. She turned around to see who it was but unfortunately couldn't see him clearly because it was dark but with the help of the street lights, she recognized him. "Yes it is." She said with a weak smile.

"What a great day today is. I get to see you twice in one day." His sleeves were rolled up to his elbow and his first button undone. He held his tie in his hand together with a black briefcase.

Gbemi didn't respond. She was too tired. The only words she muttered were "Good evening Mr Gbenga."

"Oh please, it's just Gbenga. How was your day?" He picked his suit which was hung at the back and locked the car with the remote.

"Tiring... I got back about 5 minutes ago". She threw the trash in the bin.

"*Eeya* sorry dear."

Gbemi wasn't really okay with male strangers referring to her as 'dear'. It made her uncomfortable. She saw it as them crossing the line. But she kept it to herself and hoped it won't repeat itself.

“Thank you.” She said and attempted to leave.

“Do you have dinner? I was just about to prepare something. Will you like to join me? I could bring some to your place.” He seemed like the perfect gentleman but somehow Gbemi wasn’t impressed. She felt he was too forward.

“No thanks, I have dinner. I appreciate it though,” she added.

“Alright dear, have a good night rest.”

No way, he didn’t just use the ‘D’ word again! She tried to hide her annoyance. “You too.”

Back in her apartment, the rice was hot enough. She quickly took the warm shower she had fantasised about, afterwards, settled with the food which she took with a glass of cold juice and retired for the night. As she was about to sleep, she remembered the trip to South Africa scheduled for the coming week and it made her heart ache. Favour had called her earlier that day to tell her she arrived safely but she didn’t mention the trip to her. She knew if she did, her dear friend would try to talk her out of it. Gbemi wasn’t sure if that was the best option.

She cast her mind back to the day’s activity and remembered Gbenga. She couldn’t precisely say if he was her type or not because she really didn’t have a type. She wasn’t into men. She had a few male friends but that was it. She had

never been in a relationship; not because guys never showed interest but she never gave them a chance. She knew the origin of it all but never wanted to remember it. She pushed the thought behind her. Just as she was rounding off her night prayers, she slept off.

She woke up the next morning feeling a lot better physically but not emotionally. She was ready for the day's work but had still not come to terms with the fact that she was meant to travel alone with her boss to South Africa the next week. She tried not to be troubled by it and decided not to get herself worked up but instead committed it unto God's hand and moved past it.

She had corn flakes for breakfast because she didn't really have an appetite. Knowing she was going to get hungry later in the day, she decided she'd go to the fast food joint near her office to get lunch. She wasn't so much of an outside eater but she wasn't in the mood to pack lunch to work that day. She took the bowl to the kitchen and dropped it in the clean sink. She went into her room, put finishing touches to her dressing and make up, picked her bags and in no time was out of the house.

She got to the office in good time but unlike every other day, her boss hadn't arrived. She had made the flight arrangement as he instructed but still somehow hoped plans were going to change. Some fifteen minutes after she had settled

down, Mr Kalejaye came in and walked towards his office. She stood up to greet him.

“Good morning sir.”

“Good morning Miss Johnson. I’ll be expecting a client by 9AM. Her name is Mrs Williams. When she comes, allow her right in and cancel every appointment till she leaves.” He opened the door leading into his office.

“Okay sir” She took her seat as she quickly ran through his day’s schedule in her mind. There was no female client with any previous appointment for that day. Instead, he was meant to have a meeting with the Sales representative from Afrigo PLC at 10AM. What happened in his office and the details of the discussions were not really her business except he let her in on them. Her major responsibility was to ensure his appointments never overlapped.

By 8:55AM, a young lady walked into her office. She wasn’t officially dressed. Gbemi was certain that wasn’t the client Mr Kalejaye was expecting. The lady wore a tightly fitted black lacy blouse which revealed her red bra, a pair of blue crazy jeans and a pair of red 6” shoes.

“Good morning ma’am, how can I help you?” Gbemi was sure the lady was in the wrong place.

She took off her shades, “Is Kolade in?” she asked confidently.

That was the first time Gbemi would hear someone in that office refer to her boss by his first name. “And you are?”

Without saying another word, the woman’s phone was pressed to her ear, “Hello Kolade, it appears your secretary doesn’t know her job description,” she eyed Gbemi and walked towards Mr Kalejaye’s door.

Immediately, Mr Kalejaye opened his door, came out and scolded Gbemi. “Didn’t I instruct you to allow her in and cancel my other appointments?”

“But sir, I only wanted to confirm she was the person you were expecting” She stood to her feet and tried explaining.

“Let this be the last time this happens.” He said firmly.

Gbemi was pissed. She didn’t know why Mr Kalejaye was suddenly behaving bossy in front of a woman who was dressed like a harlot going to the club. She didn’t say a word but watched both of them enter his office.

Thirty minutes had passed and it was time for his coffee. She called his intercom to find out if he was ready for it but he didn’t pick. She knew that the last time she delayed in bringing his coffee, he didn’t take it well so she went ahead to

prepare it. She set the tray and carried it gently. She held it with one hand and knocked with her free hand but got no response and so proceeded to open the door.

What she saw left her dumfounded. Her boss and the “Mrs” on the floor, naked! They were so carried away. They didn’t hear her knock or know when she came in.

Her hands immediately began to tremble and before she could regain her balance, the tray and all its content fell from her hand to the ground. The shattering of the mug jerked the two naked beings back to reality. Their shame and embarrassment could not be concealed. They immediately reached for their clothes.

“Don’t you knock again?” Mr Kalejaye barked as he wore his trouser.

“I’m so sorry sir. I knocked but didn’t get a response” she turned her back to him. Her voice trembled and hands shook uncontrollably. “I’m sorry sir.” She left without looking back.

She got into her office still trembling. She couldn’t believe her eyes. Why didn’t she think of that? She knew there was something fishy about the woman but her innocent mind didn’t conceive such a thing.

“God, this is so embarrassing. How am I going to face this man after what just happened?” She bit her little finger. She heard the door open and quickly pretended to be working on her laptop.

Mr Kalejaye and his visitor came out. Gbemi was too ashamed to look up.

They passed the front of her desk without even acknowledging her presence. Gbemi quickly went in to clean the mess she had made. The office was filled with the smell of passion, sweat and perfume, she had to stifle the nausea she felt. After about ten minutes, Mr Kalejaye was back behaving as though nothing had happened. He looked at Gbemi and asked “who am I meeting by 12?”

“Let...let me check sir?” Her hands still trembled as she pressed the buttons of her keyboard. Her memory had failed her; his appointments which she always had on her finger tips had suddenly disappeared. “You have an 11:30AM appointment with Mr Amos, the accountant.”

“Fine, let him in once he is around.” His composure surprised Gbemi.

Gbemi was beginning to wonder if it really happened or it was her mind playing tricks on her.

Just as he opened the door to his office, he turned at her and said “let what happened in this office remain in this office.”

“Yes sir”. She at least felt some relief that she wasn’t losing her mind. It actually happened.

By 2PM, she could feel her tummy rumbling, it was the official break time. She had an hour so she called Mr Kalejaye’s intercom to inform him she was stepping out for lunch. She went to the fast food joint adjacent the office. As she sat down to eat, flashes of what happened earlier still kept coming to her mind. So, she picked her phone to keep her mind occupied.

She had gone half way with her food when she saw someone she thought she recognised buying food. “That person’s back view looks so much like...could it be him? Does he also work around here?” She asked herself. Before she could answer the questions, he turned around with his tray of food in his hand.

It was Gbenga!

He spotted her immediately, smiled and walked towards her table. “Hi, is this seat taken?” He asked still carrying his tray.

“No, it’s not” Gbemi smiled, happy to see a familiar face after the horrible incident earlier that day.

“How are you? So good to see you. Do you work around here?” Gbenga asked as he held his spoon about to dig in to the heap of rice in front of him.

“I’m fine thank you. I work with Fando Oil, it’s a stone throw away. I didn’t know you worked around here too.” Gbemi said eager to know more about this her neighbour whose path in recent times, seemed to always cross hers.

“What a big coincidence, you work with Fando Oil? I have an appointment with the MD by 3:30PM”. Gbenga said, eyes wide.

“You don’t say,” Gbemi was surprised. “Wait! You are Mr Folorunsho?” She asked.

“Yes ma’am, that’s me.” With a smile, he lifted his right hand holding his spoon. “Let me guess, you are the MD’s secretary?”

“His PA actually,” she nodded and smiled.

“You mean, you were the one I spoke to last week to book this appointment?”

“Yep, that was me.” She mimicked his gesture, lifting her hand holding her fork.

“No wonder I had a good vibe about that call.”

“Well, I’m not sure about any vibe. I was just doing my job.” She smiled.

“Anyway, what a small world indeed, I could almost bet you were stalking me.”

They both laughed.

“But you know, we should hang out one of these days and get to know each other more.” Gbenga suggested.

“It doesn’t sound like such a bad idea.” Gbemi was beginning to feel more comfortable around Gbenga, her new found friend.

They finished their meal and walked to the office together. Gbenga signed in at the reception and they went upstairs.

“You can have your sit here” Gbemi pointed at one of the chairs positioned opposite her desk where clients waiting to see the MD sat. “I’ll call him once it’s time.”

“Thank you so much.” He was indeed grateful for her hospitality.

After about ten minutes, Gbemi placed a call to Mr Kalejaye informing him that his next client was around.

“Let him in.”

“Ok sir,” she hung up. Turning to Gbenga, she said “you may go in.”

The meeting lasted about forty-five minutes and Gbenga came out smiling. “I got the contract.” He threw victorious fists around.

“Congratulations, I’m so happy for you.” Gbemi smiled, half happy for him, half amused by his excitement.

“Thank you. We should celebrate you know?”

“*Hmmmm* well I guess we could,” she said still smiling.

“Dinner? My place?”

Gbemi was a bit reluctant but then thought to herself, “*there is really no harm in visiting my neighbour, is there?*”

“Don’t worry, it won’t be late and trust me, I’m a good cook,” he tried to convince her.

“Yeah right, let me be the judge of that” she smiled.

He chuckled. “Is that a yes? Do we have a deal then? Is 7PM ok?”

“It’s fine, I’ll work towards it.”

“Alright dear, see you soon.”

“Bye”. The ‘dear’ didn’t sound so out of place anymore.

CHAPTER 3

Gbemi was about ten minutes late. She had left the office early enough but had a flat tyre which cost her some fifteen minutes. She was lucky there was a vulcanizer close by at the time the tyre went flat. She didn't like being kept waiting but more so, hated keeping people waiting.

As soon as she got to their block of flats, she parked her car and headed straight for Gbenga's flat, hoping she wasn't too late.

He opened the door, after the first bell ring. "Hey, you made it." He smiled.

"I'm sorry I'm late." It was at that point she noticed Gbenga's well-built frame. He wore a white T-shirt, navy blue shorts and had an apron on.

"Oh please, don't be. I was just rounding off in the kitchen. Please, come in." He extended his arm to show her in.

"Thanks, but since you are not done, why don't I go to my place, drop my stuff and change into something more casual?"

"No problem then."

"Great." Gbemi turned around and headed for her flat. She brought out her keys, opened the door and went in. She dropped her bags on the couch and went

straight to her room. Flinging her wardrobe open, she started scanning through for a dress to put on. After almost scattering all her folded clothes, she found a free knee length *Ankara* gown she sewed about a year ago. She ran into the bathroom and had a two minute shower. In about 10 minutes, she was dressed and ready to go back to Gbenga's place. She stopped by the kitchen and took a carton of 5-Alive juice from the fridge.

Ding ding, the bell rang. Gbenga opened the door. "You look, refreshed." He welcomed her in.

"Yeah, I quickly freshened up. Hope I didn't keep you waiting," she said as she entered and admired the beautifully designed interior of his house.

"No not at all, I just finished setting up the table."

"I brought this." She extended the drink to him "I felt we could use it to push the food down" she joked and added "I know it's not wine oh, just help us manage it."

"Manage? It's just perfect, thank you," he smiled and collected it.

"Wow, your house is so beautiful. I could have sworn that either a woman lives here or a woman was involved in the designing of this place." She looked around in admiration.

“Well, you are not far from the truth. Not the woman living here part though” he chuckled. “The interior design was done by a woman.”

“I said it.”

“Are you trying to say a man can’t do this?” A little frown appeared on his face.

“Well, that’s not what I’m trying to say but...” Gbemi could not think of any excuse. “She did a great job.” She completed her sentence.

“Thanks. So to the business of this evening, the table is set.” He pointed at the dining table at a corner of the sitting room.

“This looks so good,” Gbemi said as she walked towards the table. It was a square table with four chairs.

Gbenga was such a perfect gentleman. He drew out her chair for her and motioned for her to have a sit. He then loosened the rope of the apron he wore in order to take it off. Gbemi read the words inscribed on the apron, ‘My Dad is a great Cook’.

Gbemi smiled, propping her chin on her knuckles. “Awwww, that’s so cute.”

Gbenga chuckled and hung it on one of the chairs as he sat down on the chair to her left “Thanks, my sister got it for me. She really wants me to get

married and settle down. It's amazing how she is becoming as good as my mum in putting pressure on me to get married".

Gbemi chuckled "I totally get what that's like".

"Yeah, I guess they just want the best for us".

Gbemi went silent.

Gbenga noticed. "Let's bless the food". He said a word of prayer.

"Amen." Gbemi responded at the end. She was impressed that he wasn't just homely and domestic but he seemed to be a spiritual person too.

He opened the first dish; it was spaghetti Bolognese. It smelt really good and looked so appetizing. The second dish he opened contained stewed chicken and there was fried plantain, just as she loved it; golden brown.

"Wow this looks amazing" she said, eager to taste it.

"Thank you very much" he smiled as he served her. "So how was your day?"

'Fine' would have been her usual response but then she remembered 'the incident' earlier that day. "It was.... okay I guess." She didn't sound so convinced.

"You *wanna* talk about it?" Gbenga asked with keen interest.

“I don’t know.” Gbemi didn’t think it was right to tell Gbenga about what happened in the office that day especially now that she knew he had met her boss.

“It’s okay. You can share it with me.” Gbenga’s charm seemed to be working on Gbemi who like every other woman, had a soft spot and Gbenga seemed to be quickly reaching it.

“It’s nothing really. I’ve just been a bit concerned.” She decided to talk to him about the other issue bothering her.

“About what?” He sipped juice, his eyes not leaving her.

“My boss wants me to travel alone with him to South Africa for an official assignment next week and I’m not comfortable about the whole idea”. Concern was written all over her face. She was bad at hiding her emotions even though at this point, she had no intention of doing that.

“Have you spoken to him about it?”

It was at that moment she realized she never thought about that. “No I haven’t but I can’t predict him. I don’t know how he would react.”

“Well I understand but I suggest you try first. You never know what might come out of it. I’m going to pray along.”

“Thanks, I really appreciate it” Gbemi was beginning to be grateful she had a friend in Gbenga. She felt better after opening up to him. “This is really delicious.” She pointed at her almost empty plate. “I must confess, when you offered dinner, I expected the worst but you have blown my mind away.”

Gbenga laughed. “Are you serious? Thank you. I’m glad you enjoyed it.” They continued eating. When they were done, he stood up and took the dishes to the kitchen.

Gbemi stood in the sitting room and waited for him to return from the kitchen. She couldn’t but admire the artistic touch in the living room. There was an art piece hanging close to the door. She must have stared at it for about thirty seconds. It was a painting of an African woman, backing a baby and carrying a bag on her head. As she looked away from it, her eyes caught a framed picture of Gbenga hanging above the flat screen TV. She walked closer to admire it. He wore a black suit, navy blue suede bow tie and a white shirt. The boutonniere pinned to his suit made him look like a groom. For some reason, her eyes went straight down to his side, looking for his left ring finger but it couldn’t be seen in the picture, he had both hands shoved into his pockets. She shrugged her shoulders and scolded herself for thinking he was married.

Gbenga came out just as she was about turning around from the picture. “That was my best friend’s wedding.” He dried his hands with a red checkered napkin. “I’m so sorry for keeping you waiting.” He apologized.

“No problem.” Gbemi smiled. Something still boggled her mind. It was the picture. “You looked just like a groom.” She said pointing at the picture.

He chuckled. “Groom *ke*? No o, I was the best man, I wore the same thing with the groom,” he explained.

Gbemi had her doubt taken care of. She oftentimes got a bit paranoid especially when it had to do with men. She knew it and had been trying to work on it.

“I better get going. Tomorrow is another busy day for me.” Gbemi said as she walked towards the door. “I’m so grateful for this exquisite treat.” She said nicely.

“*Haba*, it was really amazing having you around too.” He walked her to the door. “Oh, one more thing, your number.” He smiled and brought out his phone. “You won’t mind me calling to check up on you would you?”

“Nah, it’s fine.” She called out her number and he typed it.

“Thanks dear, I’ll give you a call.”

“No problem. Congrats about the contract once again” she smiled.

“Thanks, I almost forgot that was the reason we had dinner. Have a lovely night rest.”

“You too.”

She returned to her flat and retired for the night.

At work the next day, she summoned courage and knocked on Mr Kalejaye’s door.

“Come in.”

She opened the door and went in. “Good morning sir.”

“Good morning Miss Johnson,” he said.

“Sir, there is something I want to talk to you about.”

“Okay...?” He said without looking up from his laptop.

Gbemi knew her boss was always busy but she wished her could spare some time just to hear her out.

“It’s about the trip to South Africa next week.”

He looked up, giving her his full attention. “What about it?”

Gbemi began to wonder why she agreed to talk to her boss about the trip, she wished she could turn around without saying another word. She paused and tried to gather her words. “I was wondering if I had to be the one to go with you.”

“Are you sick?” He asked her with a little frown on his face.

“No sir.” Gbemi wasn’t sure if he meant ‘sick’ as an insult or if he was really asking after her health.

“Will you be sick next week?”

“No sir.” She was already convinced that bringing up the matter was a terrible idea.

“Miss Johnson” he looked sternly at her, “it appears you are not fully aware of your job description as my personal assistant. This is an official assignment and it is your job as my PA to escort me on this trip or do you want me to find a replacement? Last I checked, there are tons of people who will do anything just to be in your shoes.”

“No sir, no need for a replacement.” Gbemi wondered if he meant ‘her shoes’ as the PA or as one travelling alone with her boss.

“So if you know what is good for you, hold tightly to your job so you don’t lose it.”

“Alright sir.” She knew she wasn’t to hold on to anything more tightly than she held on to God. So, she concluded that as long as she held tightly to God, she would scale through any storm that arose.

“Any other thing?” He asked ready to return to his work.

“No sir,” she turned and left his office.

Back at her desk, she placed her head on the table and prayed for God’s help. She couldn’t afford history repeating itself.

Her phone rang; it was a number without a caller’s ID.

“Hello?” She wasn’t expecting any call.

“Hi Gbemi, this is Gbenga. How are you?” the familiar voice said.

“I’m fine thank you. How are you too?” She smiled.

“I’m good, you don’t sound okay. Have you spoken to your boss about the trip?”

“I just did, it didn’t go so well.”

“It is well. Cheer up. God is in control.”

“Thanks. I’ll be fine.”

“If you need a friend to talk to, I’m just a phone call away.”

Gbemi smiled. “Thanks, I appreciate it”. She noticed she was getting fond of Gbenga and was very comfortable around him.

“Alright dear, have a blessed day.”

“You too.” She ended the call. She felt a lot better. “This guy is just heaven sent” she said to herself as she resumed work on her laptop.

After work, Gbemi went for mid-week service at her church, it was Bible study. She hardly ever missed it. That particular Wednesday was a practical discussion session where they painted hypothetical scenarios and discussed the biblical way to tackle them. They were divided into groups.

“Any other scenario?” The coordinator of her group asked.

Her hand went up. She really didn’t plan to ask a question but for some reason she found herself doing just that.

“Sis Gbemi”

Gbemi summoned boldness to speak. “What would you do if your boss who you know womanizes instructs you to follow him on an official assignment alone?”

The whole group started mumbling, different people saying different things: “Me *ke*, I will not go o” someone shouted. “What is there? I will go fine fine, I will just be very careful *ni*.”

“One house please.” The coordinator said in order to make everyone keep quiet. “It’s very simple, as a child of God, you have the Spirit of God to lead you. Pray and ask Him what He will have you do. If He says go, then go, if He says don’t go, then don’t go even if it will cost you your job. Your peace and right standing with God is worth much more than a hundred jobs.”

Everyone was quiet.

“Do you understand, Sis Gbemi?” The coordinator asked.

“Yes I do.” She kept quiet and began to think about what her coordinator had just said. “*I need God’s leading.*” She thought to herself.

The week went pretty slowly, it was Friday night. She was in her sitting room reclining on the three sitter watching news when her phone rang. It was charging at a corner of the sitting room and so she felt lazy to stand up. “If it’s important, the person will call again.” She said lazily.

It rang a second time so she dragged herself to get it. She looked at the caller ID, it was her mum. She picked it.

“Hello mummy, good evening.”

“Gbemi, *bawoni* (how are you)?” Her mum preferred speaking in Yoruba but for Gbemi’s sake, spoke English when talking to her.

“I’m fine ma.”

“It’s been awhile o, how is everything?”

“Sorry mummy, don’t mind me, I’ve been quite occupied these past few days. How is bro Femi and Bola?”

“They are *kuku* fine. Bola was home last weekend with her fiancé. It is your own we are waiting for o. *Shey* (Do) you want your younger sister to get married before you ni?”

Gbemi rolled her eyes. “Mummy, we have different lives to live.” She tried not to raise her voice in annoyance. She had explained this to her mum over and over but she still repeatedly brought it up. That’s exactly why she didn’t like calling home. Her mum spent the next five minutes counselling her on why she needed to settle down.

“*Mo ti gbo ma* (I have heard ma).” Gbemi couldn’t contain her frustration.

“Goodnight my dear.” Her mum finally brought the conversation to an end.

“Good night ma.” She hung up. The call had already spoiled her mood. Just as she was about to connect the phone to charge, it rang again. She thought it was her mum and was already planning to ignore it when she saw it was Gbenga. She sat back in her chair and picked the call.

“Hello” she said.

“Hi Gbemi, how was your day?”

“It was good, how was yours?”

“Well mine was just there. I was indoors mostly. You *wanna* go out tomorrow?”

Gbemi had nothing serious planned for her Saturday, hanging out with Gbenga was alright by her. “*Hmmmm* let’s see” she paused for a while to think about it. “Okay, where and when?”

“Graceland Park, say 1PM?”

“Okay, that’s fine then.”

“I think we could leave together in my car or what do you think?” He suggested.

“Sure, that makes sense. It’s fine by me.”

“Alright then, see you tomorrow dear.”

“Bye”.

Saturday morning came like every other day. Gbemi had some house chores and laundry to do. She also wanted to start cutting the fabric for the next dress she wanted to sew. She had to do everything before 12noon if she wasn’t going to be late for the outing with Gbenga.

By 11:50AM, she was in the bathroom, had a warm shower and was out in no time. She had already brought out the cloth she planned to wear; a pair of jeans, a black top and flowery chiffon sleeveless kimono jacket which she sewed. Her makeup was light. She let her hair down and wore a blue sandal. She hadn’t eaten due to lack of appetite perhaps because of excitement which grew at an exponential rate. She managed to take a glass of juice. By 12:45PM, she was set. She decided to wait in the sitting room till Gbenga either called or pressed the bell.

Aside being well mannered, he was also a very punctual person. By exactly 1PM, he pressed the bell.

Gbemi stood up to get the door. The young man was looking good as always. He wore a white T-shirt and a pair of trousers and held a face cap in his hand.

“Hi” Gbemi beamed with joy.

“Hey you. You look amazing.” He said with a charming smile.

“Thanks dear, you look good too.” She paid him a compliment.

“Are you set?”

“Yes, I am” she smiled.

“Shall we?” He motioned with his hand. “After you mademoiselle” he attempted a little French.

Gbemi smiled as she led the way.

It took them about thirty minutes to get to the park. At the entrance, Gbenga paid for the both of them.

“So what will you like to do?”

“I don’t know about you but I’m hungry. How about we get shawarma and start off from there?” The excitement that had captured her appetite had finally let it go.

“That’s not a bad idea.”

As they walked to the shawarma joint, a guy walking in the opposite direction approached them giving Gbenga a pretty prolonged stare.

“Felix Felix, longest time” the stranger tried shaking his hand. “How Cynthia *na*How is Cynthia)? *I hear say una don marry last last* (I heard you two are finally married).”

Gbenga was confused! “I’m sorry, you have me mistaken with someone else. I’m not Felix.”

“No be you wey go Uniben (Isn’t you who attended Uniben)?” The stranger asked seemingly confused too.

“No, not me.” Gbenga said and turned to Gbemi. “I don’t know why people always mix me up with other people.”

The stranger walked away still convinced Gbenga was Felix.

As they got to the shawarma spot, the man selling the shawarma welcomed them warmly and greeted Gbenga “long time *Oga, how family* (how is the family)?”

“What’s happening today?” Gbenga didn’t seem to understand. “Do I have a brother I don’t know about?” He joked.

Gbemi was quiet all along. “*What a coincidence?*” She thought to herself.

“Good afternoon, please how much is your shawarma?” Gbenga went on to place the order after which they sat down inside one of the hut-like sheds and waited for it.

“So what have you decided to do about the trip to SA?” Gbenga tried to break the silence that was beginning to build.

“I prayed about it and I feel led to go” Gbemi replied “I believe everything will work out just fine”.

“Yeah definitely, God will see you through.”

“So what University did you attend?” Gbemi needed to clear her doubts.

“I don’t know what that guy was saying o, I schooled abroad. I have never stepped foot in Uniben in my life”.

Gbemi believed him and decided to move past what had just happened.

“Do you mind me asking a personal question?”

Gbemi had a faint idea of what he was about to say. “Go ahead.”

“Well, these past few days I’ve gotten to know you, I’ve discovered what an amazing woman you are and I couldn’t help but wonder why you don’t have a man in your life.” Gbenga was really interested in unravelling the mystery.

Gbemi was so correct. She knew he was going to ask about something related to why she was still single. That was the most annoying question ever. She hated when people especially guys asked her why she wasn’t married. It was her life after all and not theirs. Gbenga however appeared different from other guys, there was something about him that made her free and open.

“Hmmm, why don’t I have a man in my life?” She echoed his question. “It’s actually complicated but I guess the simple answer is that I locked them out”. She knew Gbenga was going to want her to expatiate. She was sure about that.

“Why? What happened?” He didn’t disappoint.

CHAPTER 4

Gbenga was eager to hear what she had to say.

Gbemi sighed and looked away. She had never opened up to anyone about her dark past. She kept it away from everyone including herself. “I was five years old” she paused as she felt tears well up in her eyes.

Gbenga drew nearer and held her hand. “It’s Okay Gbemi, it’s okay”

“My mum worked two jobs in order to make ends meet. She poured out her life forme and my siblings,” she sobbed softly. “My older brother, Femi was seven and Bola my baby sister was two’.

“What of your dad?” Gbenga asked, eyes narrowed with concern.

“My father” she hated the sound of the word ‘father’. “He was hardly ever there for us. He hung out with his friends at the beer parlour all day and came back wasted at night. If he stopped at being a useless man, it would have been okay. That useless man beat up my mother in front of us,” there was rage in her voice. “There was nothing she did that he ever appreciated.” She dabbed her tears with the little tissue paper in her hand.

“That’s really terrible Gbemi, you’ve been through so much.” Gbenga felt so much pity for her.

“I wish that was all, Gbenga. I really wish that was all,” she said with so much regret. “I noticed that terrible man looked at me in a strange way. Initially, I couldn’t place it. He’d come back drunk, shout at me and my siblings and then call me into his room. He’d tell me to take off my dress that he just wanted to look at me and make sure nothing was wrong with me. It kept happening for weeks until one fateful day, he came back around 7PM. Mum wasn’t back from work. He sent my brother to buy something and locked my sister up in our room. Then, he called me into his room.” She sobbed, the tears flowed uncontrollably. “He asked me to do the usual and innocently I did. He then started touching me,” she paused to catch her breath. “He carried me and threw me on the bed. His grip was so strong on me. I was scared. I screamed as loud as I could but he covered my mouth with his hand. The next thing I knew, he removed his trouser and he was on top of me. I screamed so loudly for help but there was no one to help me.” Gbemi’s voice became faint.

“My God!” Gbenga couldn’t believe his ears. “How could he do such a heartless thing?”

“That evil man they call my father raped me! He did it without any sense of remorse. He didn’t just do it once but regularly till I was seven. He told me if I told

anyone even my mother, the police will arrest me and take me to prison and I'll die there.”

“So what made him stop?”

“My mum couldn't cater for all of us. She begged her older brother to help her take care of me while she took my sister to our grandparents.”

“HmMMM thank God, at least you were no longer living with him.”

“My uncle was not different, Gbenga” she paused “That man was equally a devil. He made me fondle with his private part. It went on for another two years of my miserable life. His own lie was if I told anyone, I would become homeless. At nine, I wrote entrance exam into secondary school and thankfully I passed. I got admitted and left for boarding school. That was how that horrible phase of my life ended.” She sobbed. “No one deserves to suffer the way I did Gbenga, no one”. Gbemi had finally let it out. She had opened old wounds and wasn't sure if she felt good about it. Whatever the case, it was out. Someone finally knew about her childhood pain.

“I'm so sorry, Gbemi. I wish all these never happened to you.” Gbenga looked her straight in the eyes.

“Me too. I grew to hate men with passion. I didn’t see a need for a man in my life and so back to your question, that’s the reason I’m still single and frankly speaking, I have absolutely no regret because all men are the same; heartless, wicked and evil.” Gbemi was obviously still hurt and had not healed from the havoc done over twenty years ago.

Gbenga wasn’t sure how to come in. He didn’t know if at that point, being a man was a plus or a minus but because he was skilful in dealing with women, he yet again didn’t disappoint. He was silent for a while then said, “Gbemi, you’ve been terribly hurt by men. I probably would have said worse if I were in your shoes. I can’t say I know what it felt like being molested like that. I don’t,” he said plainly then paused before he continued. “I’m glad for one thing though,” he paused and waited to see if Gbemi was interested in knowing what that was.

“What?” She asked wondering what good could have ever resulted from all she had relayed.

“I’m grateful that you met God. He alone knows what you felt through those terrible years.”

Gbemi was silent. She wondered why God allowed it in the first place. “It’s all in the past now. I’ve moved on.” She was done talking about it. “How far with the shawarma?” she changed the topic of discussion.

Gbenga noticed she didn't want to say more and decided not to push it. He appreciated the fact that she opened up in the first place but he wasn't surprised. There was just something about him that made women open up to him and even Gbemi wasn't exempted.

He went to find out what was causing the delay "Isn't the shawarma ready?" he asked the Hausa man.

"Sorry *no vex oga, customer plenty for ground*(don't be angry sir, there were plenty customers on ground). *E don almost ready* (It's almost ready)."

"Just hurry up."He snapped.

"*But oga why you talk say no be you dey come here with your family* (why did you talk as if it wasn't you that usually come here with your family)?"

Gbenga's shawarma customer was confused and needed clarity.

"Will you shut up and mind your business?" He turned around and walked back to where Gbemi was. Few minutes later, the shawarma was ready. They ate it and had soft drinks, took a stroll round the park and towards evening went back home.

The next day being Sunday, Gbemi went to church, came back and packed for her trip to South Africa which was scheduled for the next day till Thursday.

She kept telling herself, “Gbemi, you will be fine, everything will be alright, you have no need to fear, God has assured you everything will be alright.”

That evening, Gbenga came to check on her to know how she was and if she was set for the trip. He said a word of prayer and encouraged her that everything will be fine.

Gbemi appreciated his kind gesture; she was already being won over by his gentlemanly and Christian nature. She didn't believe men like him still existed. She knew she was going to miss him but had to be careful with her feelings. She had been hurt one too many times.

“What time is your flight?”

“7:45AM”

“Wow that's early. You need to sleep early, so you can get enough rest.” He was so thoughtful.

“Yeah, I'll have my bath and sleep soon” She knew they won't see till she gets back. So, she wished he could stay some more.

“Alright then, I better start going.” He knew she needed all the time she could get.

There was silence.

GBEMI

Gbemi had not really prayed about what she was beginning to feel for the good looking young man. She knew she had to be careful both because of her past and because she didn't want to be hurt again. The few times she had tried talking to God about him, she felt this uneasiness but couldn't place it. "Thanks for coming around." She stood up to walk him to the door.

Gbenga followed suit "I'll see you when you get back dear."

"Bye" she said and resisted every temptation to be emotional. She locked the door, went in and retired for the night.

The next day, she was up really early and by 5:30AM, she was ready to leave. She put a call through to a Taxify driver and in another five minutes, his car was parked downstairs. She carefully trundled her box downstairs trying not to make noise with it. The ride to the airport was smooth and swift. She sat beside the driver and was quiet throughout as she thought about different things; Gbenga being the most frequently occurring amongst the thoughts that flooded her mind. She needed to place caution on her feelings. She also thought about her trip and wondered how she was going to cope with her boss. She reminded herself of God's word of assurance.

She arrived at the airport in good time and placed a call to Mr Kalejaye.

"I'll be there in ten minutes." He told her immediately he picked the call.

“Okay sir.” She hung up.

By 7:05AM, a female voice through the public address system announced that it was boarding time. She went through the whole checking in process and finally entered the aircraft without any trace of Mr Kalejaye’s presence. After some ten minutes in the plane, she saw him enter the plane. He wore a grey suit and carried a portable travelling bag. He sighted her.

“Good morning Miss Johnson.” He always kept things formal between them.

“Good morning sir, I was beginning to wonder if you’ll make the flight,” she said with a smile.

“I was held up in traffic,” he explained. “Thankfully, I got here in good time. I’ll see you when we land. My seat number is 20-C, I believe that’s behind.”

“Yeah it should be sir. Take care.” She said in her usual polite manner.

As the plane took off, she said a prayer then brought out a book from her bag. The book, *Following God’s Plan for your Life* by Kenneth Hagin, was given to her by Favour when she came visiting the other day. Gbemi was a fast reader. As she chewed on the content of the book, her heart was captivated by the introductory paragraph of the fourth chapter.

‘Every child of God can learn how to be led by the Holy Spirit. God’s richest blessings await those who follow after His Spirit, instead of being directed by their senses and circumstances’

At that point, she began to wonder if she was guided by God or just her senses in whatever was going on between herself and Gbenga. She read on;

‘Learning to be led by the Holy Spirit is of primary importance if you are going to obey God. If you can’t discern what the Lord is saying to your spirit, you will have a difficult time following His plan and purpose for your life. It’s that simple.’

Gbemi closed the book and began to mediate on what she had just read. She wanted to do nothing more than to obey God but she knew she must first know His will. She bowed her head and began to pray in the Spirit asking God to sharpen her sensitivity to know what the Holy Spirit was saying to her per time. If there was any time she needed God’s direction in her life, it was now.

“Lord, shine Your light, I need to know what Gbenga’s role in my life is. If he is from You or not, if he is to be a friend or more”

She had a caution in her spirit to be careful. But she wasn’t sure if it was meant for Gbenga or the trip.

When they landed in SA, she and Mr Kalejaye took a cab to the hotel. While in the car, he ran through his itinerary with her making sure everything was in check. They got to the hotel and collected the keys to their rooms which were beside each other.

“I’ll be having a meeting with Mr Abiodun, the CEO of Abby Motors over lunch by 4PM, pending that time, you can go in and rest. I’ll see you then.” He said then entered his room.

“Alright sir.” Gbemi took her bags and went into her room.

As she opened the door to her room, her phone rang. She was sure it was Gbenga. She looked at the caller’s ID and saw it was an unsaved number.

She picked the call. “Hello?”

“Hi Gbemi, this is John. Favour told me you would be travelling to South Africa for an official assignment.” John was the coordinator of her group in Bible study the previous week, the one who had answered the question she asked about the going on an official trip with a boss who womanizes. Some months back, Gbemi got to know that they had a mutual friend; Favour.

“Oh she did?” Gbemi wondered why Favour and John discussed about her and why Favour gave out that information “Yes I did, I just arrived as matter of fact.”

“Oh nice, how was your trip?”

“It was fine thank you.”

“That’s great. Have a blessed stay. I called to find out how you are doing. Take good care of yourself.”

“Thank you very much, I really appreciate it. Bye.”

She hung up. “Favour is not serious o, is that how she has been telling everybody about my plans? If I catch that girl *ehn*. ” She saved his number on her phone.

The 4PM meeting held as planned as so did every other meeting. The first three days went by with little or no hitches till the last night, Wednesday night.

Mr Kalejaye called Gbemi around 10PM and asked her to bring some documents to his room. She was already in her nighty and wondered what was so urgent about the documents that couldn’t wait till the next day.

She changed her clothes into a T shirt, pair of trousers which she secured rather too tightly with a leather belt, then wore a sweater even though she wasn’t

cold. She made sure she ‘packed’ herself very well. At that point, she knew she could not be too careful. She picked the document and knocked on Mr Kalejaye’s door.

“Who is it?”

“It’s me sir.”

“One minute please” he said

Gbemi waited outside for some seconds then she heard her boss say “the door is open, come in.”

CHAPTER 5

She opened the door which led into a waiting area where they had always met for previous discussions. Mr Kalejaye wasn't there. His voice seemed to be coming from the bedroom this time around.

“I have the documents here sir,” she expected him to come out to meet her there as was his custom.

“Alright, bring them here,” he said as if that had been the norm.

At that point she knew there was fire on the mountain. She began to pray under her breath as she approached the bedroom. She saw her boss sitting up in bed. He wore his bathrobe and was working on his laptop. She had not seen him in anything other than his usual cooperate wears which was either suit or a shirt with tie and a pair of trouser.

“Here they are sir,” she extended the papers to him.

“Thank you,” he took his gaze from his laptop to her. “I thought you'd be in your nighty by now.”

Gbemi's eyes widened in surprise. “Excuse me?” Did she just hear him say what she thought he said?

“It’s late, I assumed you would have had a shower and changed to your nighty.”

“I had to change after you called,” she wondered how that was his business.

“So in your opinion how was the trip?” He put his laptop on the bed and focused on her.

Gbemi could feel her boss’ gaze on her body. He hardly looked at her face. “I believe it was a huge success sir; you met with everyone you had appointments with and you were able to seal the deal.” She said still standing.

“Well I wasn’t referring to the meetings. How was the accommodation, feeding and the likes?”

“Okay... well to me, both the accommodation and feeding were good.” At this point, she knew she couldn’t afford to remain there any longer.

“That’s nice.” He got up, walked towards the fridge, brought out a drink and picked two of the glass cups on the fridge. “So you mean you wouldn’t have preferred a five star hotel?” He approached her and attempted to open the drink.

Gbemi didn’t want to appear too forward, but she also knew that they were the only two in the room and the second glass was for her. “Sir, I don’t take alcohol.” She told him without mincing words.

“Oh, pardon my manners. What drink would you prefer?” He opened the fridge.

“I’m fine thank you sir. I’m okay for the night sir.” She was beginning to feel really uncomfortable; her heart was racing, her fingers trembling. “I’ll like to take my leave now sir.” She tried to be firm yet still polite.

“Why the rush? Our flight is not till tomorrow afternoon.” He walked towards her. He had dropped the drink and glass cups on the fridge.

“I’ve had a really long day and I need to rest sir.” She told him point blank.

“That’s okay then. However, before you go, I need you to draft a letter of appreciation to our host, telling them how you liked the accommodation and feeding. Use my laptop,” he pointed to the laptop on the bed.

Gbemi knew he was obviously up to something. She usually drafted letters on her laptop and forwarded them to his email. He was definitely being crafty.

“Sir, I’ll rather type it on my laptop and forward it to you.”

“Are you questioning my order?” He raised his voice angrily. The smile on his face had turned to a frown.

“No sir, I’m not but I’m more comfortable with...”

He cut her sharply “and who is talking about comfort here? I gave you an instruction and you are telling me what you'd rather do. Consider this your last day as my personal assistant if you refuse to do as I say,” he threatened her.

Gbemi could smell alcohol in his breath; she picked the laptop from the bed, sat on the chair and placed the laptop on the table. Just as she was about to start working, she saw that he had been watching pornography on the laptop. She immediately minimized it and opened Microsoft word to start typing. She intensified her praying under her breath, asking God to take control of the situation.

Mr Kalejaye sat on the bed watching her as she typed.

“Dear Lord, help me out of this situation I have found myself.” She prayed in her heart. Memories of her father's assault began to flash through her mind. She prayed for a way of escape as the Bible had promised in 1 Corinthians 10:13. Just as she was finishing with the letter, she felt his presence behind her. He placed one hand on her shoulder and acted as if he was reading through what she had typed, she stiffened, holding her breath. As soon as he attempted moving his hand towards her back, she hit it off and stood up at once.

“The letter is ready sir, goodnight,” she said with a straight face and left without waiting for his response. She walked out as fast as she could and didn't

stop walking until she got to her room. She locked the door behind her and heaved a deep sigh of relief.

“Thank You Lord,” she exhaled, her whole body shaking. She was grateful it was the last night there. She didn’t bother changing to her night gown. She turned the key in the keyhole one more time, climbed her bed, covered herself with her duvet and made up her mind that she wasn’t going to open the door for anybody even if the building was on fire. She turned off her phone and forced herself to sleep. She was determined not to go back to that room even if it would cost her her job.

The next day, they left for the airport by 12noon. Mr Kalejaye acted as if nothing had happened the previous night. Gbemi wasn’t surprised. She had seen him in his act before. She plugged her ears and listened to wonderful gospel music from her iPhone. She continued reading the book she had started reading when they flew in. She made sure they checked in differently so they won’t sit together. When they got to Nigeria, Mr Kalejaye told her she could take the next day which was a Friday off and resume on Monday.

“Thank you sir,” she said.

She took a cab home. As she carried her bags upstairs, she wondered if Gbenga was in. It was just a thought; she definitely wasn’t going to check. At least,

not now that she had just arrived and needed rest. More so, it was late. She got into her flat, turned on the light, dropped her bags in the sitting room and said a prayer. She was grateful for so many things; journey mercies, the productive meetings but most importantly for God's protection and divine intervention the previous night. He promised her that everything would be fine and despite the incident, she knew God was faithful. She didn't want to try imagining what could have happened if it was not for God.

"I can't wait to tell Gbenga what happened," she said to herself as she took her things into the room. She had a warm shower, took a cup of tea and shortly after, went to bed.

The next day being Friday, her day off; she woke up by 11AM. She was refreshed and well rested. She spent quality time studying the bible and praying. As she prayed, she decided to talk to God once again about Gbenga and yet again, just like she felt the other time, she perceived God cautioned her.

"Father, what is this uneasiness I feel every time I pray about Gbenga?"

She didn't get a response but a Bible passage dropped in her spirit; Psalm 32:8. She knew it off hand but still decided to open her Bible to read it.

'I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go: I will guide you with mine eyes.'

GBEMI

She immediately knew what this meant; God assured her His direction and guidance. She opened another passage; Proverbs 3:5-6.

‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him and He shall direct your path.’

Gbemi knew God wanted her to trust Him and she was determined to do just that.

Towards evening, she placed a call to Gbenga. She wanted to know if he was home so she could visit him and tell him how everything went. He didn't pick up. She decided to call one more time. It rang for a while then it was picked.

“Hello Gbenga”, Gbemi was happy to finally speak with him.

“Hello,” a female voice said. “Sorry this is not Gbenga, wrong number,” she hung up before Gbemi could say another word.

“Useless Nigerian network,” she said to herself as she tried calling again.

After the second ring, she heard the female voice again. “Hello, please you are calling the wrong number.”

“*Na wa* for this network o,” she flung the phone on the couch in the sitting room and went into the room to get what she had bought for Gbenga. It was a blue Ralph Lauren flannel shirt. She placed the gift inside a fancy paper bag and

decided if the network messed her up at least it won't interfere with her paying him a visit.

They spoke only once while she was in SA and that was when she called him to tell him she had arrived. He didn't call her throughout her stay and even though they chatted a few times, she was the one that initiated the chats. She assumed he was busy and so she didn't bother to hold it against him. Plus God had told her to be cautious with him so she tried not to be too forward.

She wore a baby pink top and a grey skirt. She didn't do any out-of-the-ordinary makeup, just brown powder and pink lip gloss.

She pressed the bell of his apartment. There was no response. She pressed it again and waited awhile. Still there was no response. She was disappointed and was about to turn to leave when she heard the door being opened from inside. She felt excitement well up within her. She didn't realise when she started smiling. The smile quickly disappeared when she saw who opened the door.

“Hi”, the pretty young lady said.

“Hello,” Gbemi tried to conceal her confusion. “Please is Gbenga around?” She noticed the lady wore a wedding ring. She quickly put two and two together. “You must be his sister.” She smiled. “He has told me so much about you.”

“There is no one bearing Gbenga in this house.”

“Gbenga Folorunsho doesn’t live here?” Gbemi’s smile immediately disappeared again. Her mouth was left open. She couldn’t comprehend what was going on.

“Gbenga Folorunsho? I’m Mrs Folorunsho but my husband is Felix, not Gbenga. A lady called his phone some minutes ago, asking to speak to one Gbenga. There must be a mix up somewhere.”

Gbemi couldn’t believe her ears. Gbenga is married. His name isn’t even Gbenga. It was then everything started making sense; the framed picture in his house where he looked like a groom, the apron he wore that had the ‘best dad’ quote, the guy at the park that called him Felix, the Shawarma guy that asked after his family.

“How could I have been so gullible?” She said aloud as she turned slowly and went back to her apartment. “Now I understand why God kept cautioning me.” Gbemi felt duped. Just when she started thinking she had met a man that was different from the rest, she had yet again met another devil in human skin.

She went straight to her room and cried her eyes out. She was hurt and shattered. How could this have happened to her?

GBEMI

“God, why has all these happened to me? Why?” She cried aloud. She hugged her pillow tightly and cried. The hurt from her past became fresh again; she remembered the hatred she had for men and why she initially determined to lock them all out.

Her phone rang and she looked at the caller’s ID. It was John. She put the phone on silence mode and flung it on the bed. He called a second time but she didn’t pick it, then he sent a text.

‘Hi Gbemi, how are you? I called to check on you and to ask about your trip. I guess you might still be resting. Take care of you. See you on Sunday.

Cheers.’

Gbemi read it and ignored it. Her phone rang again but this time it was not John.

CHAPTER 6

She looked at the caller's ID, it was her mother. The last thing Gbemi wanted was for anyone to ask her when she will bring a man home and finally settle down. She had had enough of that and so she made up her mind to ignore the call. Her mum called a second time and then the third. At that point, Gbemi knew there was more to it than the regular phone calls she got from her mum.

"Hello mummy, good evening." She greeted and hoped her voice didn't betray her.

"Gbemi bawoni? (How are you). Is everything alright? You sound unhappy." Just like every true mother, Gbemi's mum could detect there was something wrong.

"Mummy I'll be fine, I just need to rest."

"*Pele* (sorry) my dear. I actually called because..." she paused, distracted by the house keeper "my friend sweep that corner very well," she instructed her.

Gbemi was hoping her mum wasn't about to remind her that she was growing older, "because what mummy?"

"*Ehen* sorry *jare*, it's that new girl from Togo, she does not know how to do anything," she complained.

Gbemi rolled her eyes. “*Can this woman just go straight to the point?*” She thought to herself.

“You remember Daddy Biodun, your father’s brother?” Finally her mother was focusing on the reason why she called.

“Yes, what happened to him?” Gbemi was already getting irritated by the sound of that word ‘father’.

“He called me last night to inform me that your father has been in the hospital for the past three weeks. I went to see him this morning and it appears he is terminally ill, Gbemi.”

“Mummy why are you telling me this?” Gbemi immediately had series of conflicting thoughts running through her mind. She could not explain how she felt about the news. She hated her father quite alright but she was not sure if she wanted him to die even though to her, he was as good as dead.

“Gbemi, I know he wasn’t there for you and your siblings when you were growing up but he is still your father notwithstanding,” her mother said in a calm tone. “We were all hurt, he has been out of our lives for over twenty years but if we don’t show up for him the same way he wasn’t there for us, how different are we from him?” She explained.

Gbemi knew her mum didn't know the full story of what exactly happened.

"So what does he want from us?"

"He desperately wants to see his children before he dies. He specifically said, if he does not get to see anyone, he must see you."

Gbemi was speechless. Hot tears rolled down her cheeks as she began to sob uncontrollably. She removed the phone from her ear so her mum won't hear her sobbing. She had buried her past far away and knew meeting her father would only mean exhuming those ghosts. She wasn't ready for that.

"Gbemi are you there?" Her mum asked when she didn't get a response from her.

"Yes, I am," she wiped her tears.

"Please my dear, I know it's hard, I understand what you feel," her mother sympathized.

"Mummy you don't understand anything" she snapped. "You have no idea what I've been through." The tears began to flow again.

"But Gbemi, take it easy. We were all in it together." She tried to explain ignorantly.

"I have to go." Gbemi couldn't take it anymore.

Her mother sighed, “It is well with you, dear.”

“Bye.” She hung up and flung the phone on her bed. She combed her fingers through her hair as she squeezed it and cried so hard and loud. “Lord, why is my life so messed up? What have I done to deserve all this?”

She cried, cried and cried some more. She felt like the pieces of her life were falling apart. She had no idea where to go from there. Her life felt stuck. It felt like God Himself pressed the ‘pause’ button and put everything on hold. She was literally at the lowest point of her life. The only person she knew she could call was Favour. She picked her phone and dialled her number.

“Hey babe what’s up,” Favour said cheerfully.

Gbemi sobbed, she couldn’t even speak.

“What wrong?” Favour asked with concern.

“Favour, I’m tired of life. I can’t do this anymore.” She sobbed endlessly

“What are you talking about?” Favour was beginning to get scared.

Gbemi mustered the strength to tell her about Gbenga and also the call from her mum, but omitted the part about her past.

“Oh goodness, I’m so sorry about your dad.”

“I’m not!” Gbemi said unapologetically.

“What? Why not?” Favour couldn’t believe her ears. She knew Gbemi never liked talking about her dad but she didn’t know things were that bad. “Gbemi is there something you are not telling me?” Favour was certain there had to be more.

“Well...” Gbemi was hesitant.

“Well what Gbemi? You need to help me understand what exactly is going on.”

Gbemi was back to that point again; the point of revisiting her past. It was the hardest thing ever. The last and only person she had ever opened up to-Gbenga betrayed her trust. She was still hurting terribly.

Favour noticed Gbemi wasn’t forthcoming. “I’m sincerely sorry about what Gbenga did to you dear. I really am. That guy is a big fat fish. How would he do that to you?”

Gbemi was silent.

“Sweetheart, despite all this, you know that God still loves you, right?”

Gbemi was still silent.

“Gbemi, you know that. Don’t you?” Favour had to be sure.

“Well... I guess,” she wasn’t convinced anymore.

“No, don’t talk like that Gbemi. God’s love for you is not in any way dependent on what you are going through. He loves you, your hurt notwithstanding and He wants to heal your pains. I’ll be lying to you if I say I understand what you are going through. I don’t. But you remember it wasn’t easy for me too when Bayo cheated on me? (Read Favour’s Love Story on [www. victorypath.com](http://www.victorypath.com)) I felt like I was going to die but God picked me up. He is here for you too.”

Somehow, the words of encouragement from Favour brought this strange peace to Gbemi. She could feel joy welling up within her. The fact that God loved her and was there with her gave her hope.

“I guess all I’m trying to say is allow God to take over dear. Trust Him to bring you out of this mess and trust me, He will surprise you.”

“Thanks dear,” Gbemi felt a lot better. “I really appreciate this.”

“*Haba*, what are sisters for? I’ll call you tomorrow morning, you hear?”

“Alright, thank you. My regards to Emmanuel.”

“I’d do that. Bye dear.”

“Bye.” She hung up.

“Why is it so hard to let go?” She asked herself. She had held on so tightly to her past.

“You know it is actually easier to forgive than to remain hurt?” she knew that was not her thought.

“But Lord, it’s so hard to forgive him, not after what he did to me.” She argued.

“If I have forgiven him, why can’t you? Don’t you know he hurt me too?” The voice was more audible this time around. It brought so much peace.

Gbemi sighed. She knew God had made His point.

“I need Your help, Lord.” She prayed, “I can’t do this on my own.”

After some minutes, she picked her phone and dialled her mum. She knew she didn’t end the call on a good note.

Her mum picked after the first ring.

“Hello mummy.”

“Hello my dear.” She sounded happy to hear Gbemi’s voice.

“Mummy I’m so sorry for how I spoke the other time.”

“It’s okay my dear, it’s not been easy for me too. God will help us. He certainly will.”

“Amen.”

“What hospital is he?”

Her mum gave her the details.

Gbemi wrote it down. “Alright ma, I’ll try to see him tomorrow,” Gbemi wasn’t sure how that was going to happen. “Bye mum, talk to you later.”

“Bye dear.” She hung up.

Gbemi looked at the phone and remembered John sent her a message. She read it again and this time around, for reasons she could not explain, she felt the urge to call him. She dialled his number and he picked after the third ring.

“Hi Gbemi, how are you?” He asked.

“I’m alright. Sorry I missed yours calls. I saw your message. Thank you so much I really appreciate it.”

“It’s nothing really. You were just on my mind and so I decided to place a call through.”

“Thank you.”

“You sound dull though. Are you sure you are alright?”

Gbemi realized John seemed to be really concerned. “*But then what makes him any different from Gbenga?*” She wondered. She had always seen him as just a regular church member and that was all as far as she was concerned but at this point, she knew she could do with some friendly support. “I was just told by my mum that my father is in the hospital.”

“Oh goodness. That’s serious. Is there anything I can do? Anything at all?” John was willing to help.

“Em...” she paused. “Will you be able to follow me to see him tomorrow?” Gbemi had no idea why she just did that. She wasn’t close enough to him to ask for such a favour. She regretted asking and quickly added “it’s totally fine, if you won’t be...”

He cut in. “Oh no it’s not a problem at all. What time and where will you want us to meet?”

They agreed on where to meet.

“I really appreciate it John,” she said gratefully.

“It’s my pleasure. Take care. See you tomorrow.”

“Bye.” She hung up. She had not noticed how pleasant he was. She really never waited long after church service; she was always quick to leave. But today, she was grateful for the help he was willing to offer.

As she dropped her phone, she remembered the whole Gbenga drama and her heart became heavy again. She bowed her head and prayed for God to heal her of the hurt and give her the grace to face her father the next day.

She tried to put everything behind her and at that point realized she had not eaten since morning. She stood up and went to the kitchen to fix herself something. She still wasn't in the mood to cook so she decided to indulge herself a little. She made a call to her favourite restaurant and placed an order. In another thirty minutes, her food arrived. She ate, had her bath and sat down to watch TV. She had barely watched it for fifteen minutes when she realized she was feeling sleepy and decided there was no point fighting sleep. She stood up, turned off the TV and went to bed.

The next day, at 10:30AM, she called John to confirm if the 11AM appointment was still on.

“Yeah sure,” he said.

She didn't want to delay him so she left the house almost immediately. She got to the bus stop they had agreed to meet and had to wait for a few minutes

because she was ten minutes early. While waiting, she prayed and asked God again for grace to face her father.

Just as she finished praying, she saw John approaching. He smiled as soon as he sighted her car. He wore a royal blue shirt flying on a pair of jean trousers. He had a well-built frame and was some inches taller than Gbemi. He had a dimple on his left cheek when he smiled and was indeed good looking. Gbemi wondered why she hadn't noticed all these unique features about him all along until now.

She smiled back at him as he approached.

"I hope I didn't keep you waiting for long," he asked as he sat in the front passenger's seat.

"Oh not at all", she shook her head with a smile. Gbemi took in his cologne, he smelt nice.

"Pardon my manners, Good morning." He returned her smile.

Gbemi chuckled, "Don't stress yourself. That's just formalities." She started the car and began to drive.

"You've got a nice ride," he paid her a compliment with a warm and peaceful smile.

"Oh! So it was the car you were smiling at, not me?" She joked.

“Car ke? God forbid o. When it’s not that they are chasing me.”

They both laughed.

John admired her sincerity and openness. She wasn’t the type of lady that had to 'form' in order to be accepted. “You look good as always, I must confess,” he smiled.

“As always?” Gbemi asked with a little furrowing of her brows.

“Oh yeah. You always look good. I remember telling you that some months ago. I walked up to you after church and told you I liked your dress. You wore a purple cord lace.” He remembered every detail. “That dress looked so good on you. Can you remember it?”

Gbemi remembered it perfectly well; as a matter of fact she sewed it but that was not what caught her attention. She was amazed both at the fact that he had admired her all along and he was so accurate with the details he gave. “Do I have a secret admirer?” she teased.

“Nah, there is nothing secret about it. I have always desired to be close to you but you didn’t seem to give me or anyone that chance.”

“Hey that’s not true. I’m close to someone.”

“Oh please don’t tell me it’s Jesus because I am also close to him.” John pointed to himself.

“Nope, I was referring to Favour.”

“Oh yeah, she’s a great lady. We met a couple of years back. She has told me so much about you.”

“Both of you should well done, be discussing me behind my back.”

He chuckled. “Don’t start feeling important o,” he teased.

Gbemi laughed.

“But on a serious note, I want you to know I’m always available when you need a friend.”

“Thank you. I really appreciate it.” She gave him a sideways glance and smiled.

“You are welcome. So are we almost there?” He asked.

“Yeah close. I really appreciate you doing this. It means so much to me. I need all the support I can get.”

“It is well with your father in Jesus name. May his recovery be speedy and permanent in the mighty name of Jesus,” he prayed.

“Not that kind of support, John.” She gave him another sideway glance and shook her head.

“Is there something I’m missing out?” John was confused.

“It’s complicated.”

“Oh okay then. It is well.”

“Here it is. And we areeeee here,” she said as she turned and entered the fenced compound of the big private hospital. “I’m told that he is in room 18, wing C or something like that but I’m sure the nurses at the reception will have all the details,” she said as she picked her bag and opened the door.

“Yeah they will.” John came out of the car.

They walked towards the hospital building, entered and were greeted by the nurses who told them the room number after she introduced herself as the patient’s daughter.

As Gbemi approached the room, she could feel her heart beat faster and her pulse quicken. She stood at the entrance, took a deep breath and opened the door slowly.

John watched all that was happening and followed her behind but stayed at the entrance while Gbemi went in, leaving the door open.

GBEMI

As she entered the room, she saw her father on the bed. He lay asleep. He was emaciated, he received oxygen through nasal prongs and his vitals were displayed on a monitor. He looked chronically ill.

As she walked closer to his bed, he woke up and saw her. He tried raising his head but was too weak to sustain it. He mustered strength to speak.

“Thank you for coming. I know I don’t ever deserve to see you. I prayed every day of my life that I will get to see you one more time to let you know how sorry I am for all the pain I caused you.”

Gbemi could not hold back the tears. She had been greatly hurt by this man who lay almost lifeless on the hospital bed.

“What I did was heartless and inhumane. But I did not know any better then. Years later, I met Jesus and He turned my life around.” He explained.

Gbemi wished he had met Jesus way earlier, he wouldn’t have molested her. She however was happy to hear that he was now born again.

“I’m dying and I know it but before I go, I beg you,” he slowly attempted putting his hands together, “please find a space in your heart to forgive me.”

Gbemi moved closer and held his hand. They were cold and shaky. Tears rolled down his eyes. She felt so sorry for him. She knew the past could not be

rewritten and that she had finally gotten to that point where she had to let go. She tried to speak but no words came out. Hot tears rolled down her cheeks uncontrollably.

John watched from afar. He wondered if there was anything he could do but instead decided to pray for God's strength and grace for Gbemi.

"I...I forgive you daddy."

That was it! She felt new, she was totally liberated. All the chains that had hitherto held her bound were loosened and her burden, lifted. Little wonder the Bible says in Matt 11:28, *'Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'*

"Thank you, thank you so much. God indeed answers prayers. This has always been my prayer." Her dad was really grateful.

"Yes He does," she smiled and then turned to John signalling for him to come closer. "Come and say hi to my dad," the word 'dad' came out with so much ease this time around.

He was amazed at what he had just witnessed. He didn't know how the tension in the air which he could almost palpate dissipated in minutes, he was certain it could only have been God. He walked towards Gbemi.

“Daddy, meet my friend, John.” She smiled.

“Good morning sir, it's a privilege to meet you,” he said politely and bowed his head slightly.

“Such a good looking and respectful young man. Your mum taught you well,” he smiled at Gbemi.

“No dad, we are just....” Gbemi tried explaining.

John cut in. “Thank you sir. You have a very pretty daughter too,” he smiled as he took his gaze from the elderly man to Gbemi.

“Am I missing something here?” She said a little confused.

“It's complicated.” He winked.

“Nice one” she smiled, turning to her dad. “We need to get going. I'll ensure Bro Femi and Bola come and see you and I'll definitely still take out time to come.”

“I'll appreciate that.”

They left.

In that car, Gbemi asked inquisitively, “so what was all that in there?”

“What was what?” He smiled and played dumb.

“Water works, be acting like you don’t know what I am saying.” She said naughtily.

“Is it the part of me being good looking or you being pretty that you don’t understand?” He tried to play smart.

“Don’t worry o, I will not say anything.” She started the car.

John changed the topic of discussion. “I must confess, I’m so glad about what happened in there with your dad. God is amazing.”

“Yes He is. I’m glad too.” Gbemi drove John to the car par she picked him up from. “I’m so grateful for all you did today. You were amazing.”

“Nah, it was nothing, really. I was honoured to be there. Do have a nice day. See you tomorrow.”

“You too dear. Take care.” It was Gbemi this time around saying the ‘D’ word.

CHAPTER 7

Gbemi decided to take the rest of her day off from every form of work. She stayed home to rest and prepare for the week ahead. She still had a hard time believing what had just happened; the joy she felt after forgiving her dad. She never knew it was going to be that easy once she allowed God to take over. She had dreaded seeing her father before then but now, was looking forward to the next visit.

She got back home around 3PM. As she climbed the stairs that led to the floor she shared with Gbenga, she recalled all that had happened in the hospital. As she remembered the smart stunt John pulled, she smiled. She noticed she was smiling and quickly tried to compose herself.

“What is wrong with me?” she thought to herself. “Gbemi, you better behave yourself o,” she scolded herself playfully.

Just as she opened the door that led to her apartment, she heard the door leading to Gbenga’s flat open.

“Gbemi” she heard her name. She knew that voice.

She stood still, backing the door.

“How are you doing?” He tried to act like nothing ever happened.

Gbemi turned around and smiled. She initially intended for it to be a fake one but suddenly, she realized it was a genuine smile beyond her control.

“Hi Gbenga, it’s been a while. How have you been?”

Gbenga was shocked to his bones. He could not hide it. His face gave him away. He apparently hadn’t expected her to respond the way she did. He was embarrassed, having pulled a fast one on her.

Gbemi was proud of the woman she had become by the help of the Holy Spirit.

“I’m...I’m fine.” He stammered.

“That’s great. Take care.” She opened the door leading to her apartment and went in without waiting for another word from him.

Gbemi had not gone far. She stood behind her door till she heard the sound of his door close then gave a sigh of relief. “Thank You Lord for boldness,” she said. *“I cannot pack out because of him. I know I’ll keep seeing him but I must remain strong,”* she thought. “Lord, please give me grace,” she prayed. The feelings she had for him had gone but she knew she was still in a vulnerable state.

She went in and dropped her bag on the centre table then went into her room to change into something light and free because the weather was quite hot. When

she returned to the sitting room, she turned on the TV and with a chilled drink, sat to watch it.

She picked her phone from her bag to call John and thank him for his support but instead what she saw something that made her upset; it was a *WhatsApp* message from Gbenga;

‘Hi Gbemi, I’ve missed you.’

“Is this guy out of his mind?” She asked angrily. “It was bad enough he made me fall for him and deceived me into thinking he was an unmarried man, now he is telling me this rubbish.”

She felt like going to his flat, banging the door and warning him to never in his life try that rubbish again but she waved the thought off. She read it again and intentionally didn’t reply. She knew he would know she had read it.

She dialled John’s number but he didn’t pick it. She tried again but still with no response. She decided she’ll try again later. She believed that if a person didn’t pick after the second call, there was no point trying a thousand times.

She remembered her conversation with her father about ensuring her siblings come to greet him so she decided to act fast. She sent a *WhatsApp* message to her brother, Femi. She had a feeling he was at work. His job as a medical doctor

almost always left him busy and mostly unavailable. She hardly called him because he'd always reject her call and send a message that he was at work. Sometimes it got really annoying and at such moments, she would complain and wonder if her brother wanted to get married to his profession; she however tried to remain understanding.

'Hi bro Femi, how are you?'

She didn't bother waiting for his reply. "*He'll probably reply tomorrow,*" she told herself. But she was so wrong, after about five minutes, his reply came in;

'Hey Gbemi, how na? I'm okay. I'm at work at the moment but I'll call you as soon as I can. Trust you are good'

Yet again, he didn't disappoint.

'Yes I am, just don't forget to call.'

She was already used to his busy schedule but she hoped it won't hinder him from getting a wife. Not just any wife but one that would be understanding and willing to pay the necessary sacrifices. She knew it was not a child's play. She pitied those that got married for the wrong reasons such as titles or the positions their spouses held. She understood that marriage is much more than that. "Anyway what do I know, I'm not married," she told herself and dismissed the thoughts.

She decided to call her sister who was more readily available. She picked after the first ring.

“Hi sister Gbemi, what’s up?” She was happy to hear her sister’s voice.

“I’m fine o, how are you?” The feeling was mutual.

“I’m okay, I’m trying not to allow this wedding plans stress me out.”

“Awwww, sorry dear. I can imagine. It’s getting closer true *true* o. Just...” she counted her fingers, “five months to go.”

“It’s four months and two weeks left.”

“You know I’ve told you to carry me along. Whatever you need me to do, I’ll clear my schedule for you.”

“I *kuku* know, I didn’t just want to stress you.”

“Please stress me o. How many sisters do you have?” She smiled.

“Only one o,” She chuckled. “Thank you. So I was hoping I could put you in charge of the *asoebi* (uniformed traditional attire). My friends will contact you and get it from you. What do you think?”

Gbemi's head suddenly felt faint. "*Aso what? Did she just put me in charge of asoebi? Ha! I don't plan to do asoebi for my wedding. Which kind wahala be this now* (what kind of problem is this)?" She thought.

"Hello sisterly," that was the pet name they used for each other. "Are you there?"

"Yeah sure." Gbemi was carried away in her thoughts. "No problem." She said it not because there really was no problem but because she loved her sister and so was willing to make the sacrifice. "When will I get it?"

"I'll definitely let you know when it's ready. When it is, I will bring them myself, and maybe I'll come along with Kola so he can say hi." Kola, Bola's fiancé, also lived in Lagos where she planned to buy the *asoebi* even though she herself lived in Ibadan.

"Alright o but hope you know that my own will be free o. I don't want to hear stories." She teased.

"Sisterly, you that are meant to buy for people." She always knew how to get back at her sister.

“You and who? Do you think I’m plucking money on the tree? Anyway the reason I called was because of daddy,” she paused and waited for her sister’s response.

“Daddy?” There was disgust in her voice. “What about him? What does that man want in our lives, now of all times?”

“He is sick,” she paused and added “very sick” for emphasis.

“Wait o sisterly, why are you now sounding so concerned for him?”

“He is our father, Bola,” she said softly. “We have to forgive him. It was really hard for me but with God’s help, I was able to.”

Bola was silent.

A thought crossed Gbemi’s mind *“If anyone told me I’ll be the peacemaker between my father and my siblings, I would have argued but now, I believe it can only be God.”* She spoke again, “Bola, please allow Jesus heal you like He did me. I went to visit him today and he desperately wants to see you and bro Femi.”

Bola sighed deeply “Sis Gbemi, what you are asking is hard and you know it.”

“Yes dear, I do but didn’t we ask for more when Jesus forgave us? It’s not easy but trust me, it is so worth it. When next you are in Lagos, please try to see him. The sooner the better.”

“Okay, I will,” she said reluctantly.

“*Pele* (sorry) dear, it is well. My regards to Kola.”

“Alright sis. Take care.”

“Bye.”

Gbemi felt fulfilled. There was this sense of accomplishment that brought her joy. “One down, one to go,” she shouted aloud.

She checked her message notifications and saw more messages from Gbenga;

‘Gbemi, why are you not replying me?’

‘We can make this work.’

‘Please I desperately need to see you.’

‘I’m only a stone throw away.’

Gbemi could not take it anymore. She had had enough of his mess. She decided to call him and end the influx of his annoying messages.

As she waited for him to pick, she sensed God calming her down. She decided that although she was going to be firm, she wasn't going to say anything that won't reflect Christ.

“Hello Gbenga,” she said with a stern voice.

“Hi Gbemi, I've been trying to...”

Gbemi cut in sharply, “This call is not for you to explain yourself or try to fix anything. It's to warn you to stay away. I don't want to have anything to do with you or your family. Let this be the last time you send such a message.”

“But Gbemi...”

She hung up.

“Guys are just wicked.” She remembered John and then changed it to “some guys,” she smiled at the possibility of John being an exception. He wasn't the typical tall, dark and handsome fellow. He was about 5 feet 10 inches tall, fair complexion and if one was to compare him with Gbenga in terms of looks, Gbenga had a more built frame although John was very handsome too. But you know what they say; ‘beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder.’ There was no way Gbemi was going to behold Gbenga and see any beauty in him anymore. Fortunately for her, the physical appearance was not what Gbemi was after. She knew there was much

more to a man than just his physical appearance. In as much as the looks were important, she sought for more. Does he know God? Does he love God? Does he have a passion for the things of God? Is he going to help her grow spiritually and love God more? These and many others were her criteria and Gbenga, despite his good looks, failed woefully. But with John, she saw so much potentials, she however decided to take it a step at a time. She had just been hurt but one man, it would be unwise to place her heart in the hands of another.

Much later in the evening, she had a call. She checked the caller's ID. It was John.

“Hi Gbemi, how are you? Sorry I missed your call the other time, I was in a meeting.

“*Oh ok*, no problem. You mean you had a meeting this afternoon yet you agreed to follow me to see my dad in the morning?” Gbemi was rather impressed.

“Well yeah but em...it's nothing really.” He didn't want her to feel like a burden.

“I really appreciate it. That was so thoughtful of you. I'm so grateful.”

“You are welcome. So how was your day?”

“It was good. Didn’t do much though. I’ve been indoor since I returned.

How about you? What time did you get home?”

“Some minutes ago. I’m pretty exhausted.” One could tell from his voice.

“Awww sorry about that. You should get something to eat and then rest.”

“Yeah I will. Thank you.”

“Goodnight,” she knew he needed all the rest he could get.

“Goodnight dear.”

Almost immediately, her phone rang again. She hoped it was John, perhaps he had something else to say. Sadly, it wasn’t. It was her brother, Femi. She loved him quite alright but at that moment, she was more eager to speak to John than anyone else. She picked the call.

“Hello bro Femi, how are you? I’m guessing you have been so busy.”

“Yeah, I just got back from work, plus I was on call last night too.” He sounded exhausted.

“Wow, it is well with you. It’s God that didn’t let me write Medicine in my JAMB form.” She teased.

“You are not serious.” He chuckled. “So what’s up?”

“I’m alright. How are you too? Will you be able to go to church with the way you are feeling?”

“Sure I will. I’ll just need to get some rest. I don’t like missing church. It’s always a time of refreshing.”

“Very true.”

“So what was it you wanted to tell me?”

“Daddy is in the hospital. It appears he is terminally ill and wants to see us before...” she couldn’t complete it.

“Are you serious? When did you get to know about this?” He was shocked to hear the sad news. As a medical doctor, all sort of diagnosis ran through his mind and he wondered how long his father had left. He too wasn’t close to their father while growing up but wasn’t as hurt as Gbemi was.

“Mummy told me yesterday.”

“Have you gone to see him?”

“It was tough but I was at his place today.”

“That’s serious. Please send me the address of the hospital. I should check on him after church tomorrow”.

“Alright, I will do that. He is really looking forward to seeing you and Bola.”

“Hmmm it is well. Anyway, thank you.”

“You are welcome. Hope you find time to call mummy?”

“That woman,” he chuckled. “You know if I don’t call her, she will definitely call me”

“True but that’s not an excuse not to call her.” Gbemi was already beginning to sound like a mother herself.

“I know, I’ll call her. Anything else?” He joked.

“Nothing for now. Take care of yourself, find time to rest else you’ll be the one needing a doctor if care is not taken.”

“Yes ma. You are fast becoming like your mother,” he told her the truth.

“*Na you sabi* (It’s you that knows). Thank you.”

“Alright dear. Be good.”

“Bye.” She hung up.

She was already feeling sleepy. So, she had her bath and went to bed early.

The week went like every other week and so did the month. She kept doing what she knew how to do best; loving God and being the cheerful lady she was. Thankfully, the incident with her boss never repeated itself.

John had begun to be a frequently recurring part of her life. They spoke more often and hung out a few times.

One Saturday evening, she sat in her sitting room watching Mount Zion TV which was showing *Last Man Standing*, one of their recent movies, for some reasons it reminded her of herself because the lady in the movie had been molested by her father as a child and sailed through life with the hurt.

After the movie ended, she remembered the next day was Sunday; thanksgiving Sunday for that matter. She scanned through her wardrobe in her mind trying to figure out what outfit would be best. Somewhere behind her mind, she took into cognisance the fact that John was going to be in church. She stood up and went to the room to check out for herself what she could wear.

She had a lot of clothes to pick from, many of which she sewed herself. As she perused her hung clothes, one in particular caught her attention. It was a coral peplum cord lace blouse and an A line skirt which she recently sewed. It had a V neck with pearls beautifully hand sewn to the neckline. It brought out her lovely shape. It was to go with a royal blue headgear and accessories.

She brought it out and hung it since it really didn't need ironing, she decided to go ahead and get her accessories ready. It was just 7PM yet she prepared for church which was not until another 13 hours as if she was about to leave. She was not usually this enthusiastic. She loved God and the gathering of believers, no doubt about that but this time around, she really looked forward to being in church. Did it have anything to do with the fact that John was going to be there? The truth is he had always been there. She just had not paid attention.

After all the running around in preparation for church the next day, she decided to have a shower. She went into the kitchen and prepared pancake with a cup of Milo then went back to the sitting room to continue watching TV.

The next day, Gbemi got up a bit late and immediately jumped out of bed. She was thankful she had prepared for church the previous day. The time was 6:50AM and service was 8AM. She knew with the traffic, it would take her an average of 40 minutes to get to church so she really didn't have time on her hand. She said a short prayer and jumped into the bathroom. She got dressed as fast as she could. By 7:25AM, she was dressed and ready to leave. She got to church a few minutes past eight and quickly sat where the usher directed her. The service began with a 30 minutes prayer session after which a chorister stepped forward to lead worship. As the worship went on, Gbemi began to sense a need to be more

active in church. She needed to join a unit and the unit she felt persuaded to join was the prayer band. She made a mental note to see the prayer coordinator after service.

She kept looking back and stylishly checking if John was around. The worship session ended by 9AM and she had still not sighted him. She was beginning to wonder if he was still going to make it. She realized she was beginning to get distracted and decided to take her mind off it. Occasionally, she still looked back hoping he had come. It wasn't a big church; the population was an average of hundred people so spotting a member wasn't meant to be such a big deal. She could feel disappointment set in when she realized he was nowhere to be found. She began to think of possible reasons why he wasn't around. "*Could he have slept off? Was he held up in traffic? Did he change his mind about coming to church?*" She concluded that whatever the case was, she'll call him after church to find out but in the meantime, she had to focus on the service.

As the service went on, she got more engrossed and was having a great time in God's presence. Just before time for the sermon, she saw a female usher walk down the aisle carrying the Bible of the minister who was going to take the sermon. Gbemi saw the back view of the minister as he followed behind the usher. She looked away and continued listening to the choir as they sang 'Made A Way'

by Travis Greene. Something about the minister that had just walked past looked so familiar. She looked in his direction again but he had already sat down in front, beside the pastor of the church. After the choir's ministration, the pastor stepped on the podium to introduce the minister.

“Praise the Lord church.” He spoke into the microphone. His baritone voice boomed through the church.

“Hallelujah.” The congregation echoed in response. A few people stood to their feet and waved their hands while the majority which Gbemi belonged to sat down as they replied.

“Thank you, choir for that very powerful ministration.” He looked towards the direction of the choir then facing the congregation, he went on, “and just as the choir just sang, I decree over that situation that you are going through where it seems there is no way, the Almighty God will make away in Jesus name.” He raised his left hand.

“Amen!” The voices from the congregation roared.

“This morning, bringing the word of God to us is one of our very own; a brother and a dear friend. Join me to welcome Brother John Adeniran.” He smiled towards his direction and waited for him to climb the podium then gave him a warm hug.

The congregation applauded.

Gbemi's mouth dropped open in amazement. She couldn't believe her eyes or ears. It was John; the same John that she had been talking to casually almost every day. She had no idea he was the one preaching. Not because she didn't think he could, he was her Bible study group leader so she was well aware of the fact that he was a good teacher of God's word. She just wasn't expecting this. She quickly gathered herself together before anyone, especially John noticed how shocked she was. She joined the congregation to applaud.

He wore a grey suit with a baby pink shirt and black tie. He looked really good and well groomed. Gbemi needed special grace to focus on what he had to say and not the person talking.

The message lasted for about an hour but to her, it seemed like just ten minutes. She loved how he divided the scriptures in such a practical way as he gave examples of personal experiences and linked them with his sermon. He was so well grounded in the Word yet so elementary in his approach that the least mature believer could understand and the unbeliever wouldn't feel lost or out of place. He preached on a message he titled 'Standing Tall in the Face of Storms.'

He started by stating that storms are bound to come. "Even our Lord Jesus faced storms. Dying for you and I wasn't an easy task, but in the face of it all, He

received grace from the Father to pull through with it.” He went on to remind the church about the scripture that states that

‘...when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned and the flames shall not consume you. Isa 43:2.’

“The Bible didn’t say ‘if’, it clearly said ‘when’ which means the fire experience is bound to happen but we must be of good cheer, for God will be right there with us just as he was with the three Hebrew men in Daniel 3:24-25.”

He went on to narrate an experience he had. “I remember when I was in the university and cultists came to my hall to attack us, I was in year two then. It was my first and thankfully last experience with cultists. They came right into my room. Brethren trust me that was a fiery experience for me. I must have wet my pant that day.” He chuckled.

The church burst into laughter. Gbemi laughed, perhaps the hardest.

“It wasn’t funny then. As I lay on the floor, I immediately remembered the scripture we just read and started praying under my breath. Long story cut short, God saw me through it and I was unharmed.”

Gbemi was intrigued by the story. She never knew that about him. Actually, there were so many things about him she didn’t know and she realized there was a

deep longing to know more. She could perfectly relate with his experience because it reminded her of her unpleasant experience with her boss her last night in SA.

He concluded by telling the church, “no matter how terrible the experience you find yourself, God assures us three things; one, you aren’t the first person to go through it. Two, God will not bring your way an experience beyond your capacity and three, there would always be a way of escape as recorded in 1 Corinthians 10:13.”

He made an altar call to the unbelievers and six people came out to give their lives to Christ. He led them in prayer and then prayed for them.

After service, Gbemi went straight to meet the prayer band leader as she had initially planned and made her intentions to join the unit known to him. He was pleased and briefed her about their meeting days which were every Tuesday evening and an hour before each service. She planned to attend subsequent meetings. She gave him her number and he promised to add her to the *WhatsApp* group page.

As the prayer band leader walked away, Gbemi tried to make up her mind to either say hi to John or leave without a word. Her excuse would have been that there were a number of people who wanted to see him and he definitely had meetings he had to attend. But before she could decide what to do next, she heard

someone call her name from behind and tap her shoulder, she turned and saw it was John. Despite his busy schedule and long list of people waiting to see him, he had squeezed out time to say hi to her even if it was going to be for just a minute. Gbemi was really impressed.

“I had no idea you were the one preaching today.” She confessed.

“Well, that makes two of us.” He smiled.

“What? You didn’t know?” She exclaimed, her eyes widened in surprise, her mouth slightly opened and her right hand covered it.

“No, not that. Of course I knew. I meant the ‘you not knowing it was me’ part. It was announced on Wednesday, after Bible study.”

“Oh, I left immediately the Bible study ended, before announcement.” She looked away, guilt was written on her face because she knew he had tirelessly encouraged her to always wait till the end of service before leaving.

“As usual,” he said sarcastically.

“Don’t worry, I’m going to change you’ll see. I’ve just told the prayer band leader that I’ll be joining the unit.” She seemed so proud of herself.

“Wow, that’s great,” John was impressed. “Anyway, I hope you enjoyed the sermon?”

“Every bit of it!” She beamed with joy. “Trust me, I could relate with the storms you spoke about. I was so blessed,” she felt excitement well up within her, she couldn’t explain why.

“I’m glad you did,” he smiled. “We definitely have a lot of...” a church member tapped him from behind and whispered to him that the pastor was calling him. “I’m so sorry Gbemi, I have to leave now. We’ll pick up from where we stopped.”

“Okay, no problem.” Gbemi understood he had to go but notwithstanding, was unhappy, she was left in suspense *‘a lot of what now? What was he going to say?’* She wondered.

She turned to leave and hoped John won’t delay in ‘picking up from where they stopped’.

She got home in good time, thanked God for a wonderful time at church and silently prayed John would call. She went in to change her cloth and as she did, she wondered if John even noticed her exceptional appearance. She pushed back the thought and went into the kitchen to prepare lunch. She didn’t have breakfast that morning as it was her usual practice every Sunday to fast and break with lunch. She brought out a bowl of stew from the freezer and placed it in the microwave then began boiling rice and she fried plantain on the other burner.

Shortly after she finished frying the plantain, she heard her phone ring. She rushed out to pick it hoping it was John. Alas it wasn't. It was a call from 555. She hissed and cut the call then decided to clean and dust the sitting room while waiting for the rice to boil.

After some minutes, she went to check the rice she was boiling.

The water had dried but it was still hard so she added more water.

She heard a message notification tone from her phone which was with her in the kitchen. She checked it and realized it was John. She was excited and didn't waste time in replying.

'Hi Gbemi'

'Hi John'

'Are you busy?'

'Not at all'

'Ok'

“‘Ok’? Is that all he has to say?” she thought to herself. Before she could finish asking, her phone rang. It was John.

“Hello” he said “I wasn’t sure if now was an appropriate time to call that was why I chatted you up first,” he explained.

“It’s absolutely fine.” Gbemi smiled knowing how she had been eagerly looking forward to the call. She walked to the sitting room and sat down comfortably on the sofa.

“You looked amazing today, I must confess.”

Her heart missed a beat. ‘*Oh my God,*’ her mind screamed. She felt her head spin 720 degrees. That complement made her day, she was glad he noticed. “Thank you, you looked really good too.”

“Thank you.” There was some silence. John spoke before it became too awkward. “So we were saying something before I got called by the Pastor. I can’t remember what exactly it was.”

Gbemi could remember but didn’t want to appear too forward so she decided not to say anything.

“Well, I guess that one has gone but there is something important I’ll like to say however, not over the phone. What’s your tomorrow like? Can we meet tomorrow?”

Gbemi didn't even bother to pose. "I'll be leaving work anytime from five tomorrow."

"If you won't be too tired, I'll like us to see."

"No problem. When and where should we meet?"

They agreed on the time and place, a restaurant not too far from her house. He didn't want her out late.

Gbemi began to smell something odd, something harsh and unpleasant. She however couldn't place it. She kept talking with John and then the smell became familiar. It was the smell of burning rice!

"Oh Goodness my food is burning," she exclaimed and ran to the kitchen. She put the phone on speaker and dropped it on the ceramic kitchen slab.

"Oh I'm so sorry....I really am." John apologised repeatedly. "It's all my fault."

Gbemi turned off the fire. "No it's not. I should have been more sensitive and alert. Thank God, it's that bad."

"*Eeya*, sorry about it. I'll make it up to you tomorrow," he smiled.

"Okay o, I'll be looking forward to it."

“Alright then, tomorrow it is. Let me allow you rest.”

“Ok. Thank you. See you tomorrow.”

“Bye.”

CHAPTER 8

Gbemi wondered what it was that John wanted to talk to her about. The only things she could think about were either he wanted to encourage her concerning her father or he wanted to talk her into being more consistent and involved in the church activities. That however was no longer necessary. There was still one more thing but it was too huge for her mind to conceive it. She tried not to think too much about it. “Tomorrow will definitely come,” she kept telling herself. But she just couldn’t wait.

She prepared for the next day as if preparing for her first day at work. She ironed her clothe and hung it, then packed her bag. She literally counted down to 6PM the next day. She managed to find appetite to eat the burnt offering she had prepared.

As the night drew closer, her level of excitement increased rapidly. Just before bed, she thanked God for the day and committed the night and the next day’s events unto God’s hand.

“Holy Spirit, take over tomorrow’s outing in Jesus name.” Those were her last words before she slept off.

Mr Kalejaye hadn't changed much; a womanizer and workaholic but he was the least of her concerns. She was her usual self and carried out her regular tasks. She never gave him any chance to bring up what had happened when they travelled and although he himself didn't seem like he was going to bring it up, she could sense that he still wanted to get back at her for turning down his advances. By 4:45PM, fifteen minutes to the official closing time, he called her into his office.

"Take these files," he pointed at a heap of documents. "They are the financial report of the projects we've carried out in the past two years. Go through them, cross check the income and expenditure and give me a detailed report of the company's expenses within those two years."

"When is it due sir?" Gbemi hoped he wasn't about to do or say something ridiculous.

"I need it before you leave today," he said without looking up from his laptop.

"But sir, it's fifteen minutes to five already."

"Have I asked for the time?" He gave her a stern look.

She was upset. She couldn't believe that he had such a voluminous task for her yet he waited to the close of work to give her, more so, Mr Magbagbeola was

in charge of the company's finances. "*How could he be so inconsiderate?*" She knew he was doing it intentionally, but whatever his motive was didn't matter. She had plans for the evening and he was about to mess them up.

She took the documents and returned to her desk, fuming. The work given to her wasn't a 15 minutes task; she knew it would take her another 45 minutes to 1 hour. "*Should I call John and reschedule?*" She wondered as she picked her phone, contemplating dialling his number or not. "*Let me start first, if it seems like I won't be able to make it in time then I'll call him,*" she concluded.

"Lord, I ask for divine speed," she prayed as she started. She went through the documents one after the other starting from the oldest to the most recent and to her amazement, by 5:25PM, after just 40 minutes, she was done. She saved the report in a flash drive and went straight to Mr Kalejaye.

"Here it is sir," she stretched out the flash drive to him.

"Do you know what I asked you to do?" He asked in amazement.

Gbemi had always been very efficient and Mr Kalejaye knew it. He just didn't expect her to be done so soon.

"Yes sir, I did what you asked," she said without mincing words. "*This man should take this thing and stop wasting my precious time,*" she thought within her.

Mr Kalejaye collected the flash drive and inserted it into his laptop. “Let’s see what you said you have done.”

Gbemi looked at the time. The longer she was held up at work, the more upset she became.

Mr Kalejaye took his time, looking through the document. “I see,” he nodded. “What of that of... okay, it’s there,” he spent another two very long minutes looking through it. “Alright, you may leave.”

Gbemi was out of his office before he finished his sentence. She hurriedly packed her laptop and rushed out. On her way out, she checked the wall clock in the reception, it was 5:40PM, she couldn’t believe how late she was. “*I definitely have to call John to explain to him that I’ll be a bit late.*” She dropped her laptop in the boot of the car. That was considered the safest place especially in a place like Lagos. She sat in the car and brought out her phone to dial his number. He didn’t pick up the first time.

“Ooooh where did this guy throw his phone now?” She dialled his number again and just as she was about losing hope, he picked.

“Hi Gbemi,” he said with a loud voice, there was so much noise in the background.

“Hi John, good evening,” she was happy to hear his voice. It seemed like forever since they last spoke. “I want to let you know that I’ll be a bit late, I was delayed at work,” she explained.

“Actually.” he went silent.

“Actually what? What is the matter John?” Gbemi was beginning to get scared. “*What’s going on?*” She thought.

“I’m sorry Gbemi, I won’t be able to make it,” he sounded really sorry.

Gbemi was disappointed, to say the least. “*Why did he have to wait till the last minute? What came up?*” she wondered. “Why? What happened?” Her voice revealed her disappointment.

“You see...” he paused “em...something came up.”

Gbemi was silent, waiting for him to explain himself.

He burst into laughter, “I was just kidding. I’m already on my way. I got you there didn’t I?” He teased.

“You are not serious John, 1 – 0. I will do my own back, you will see,” she was so relieved. She loved a number of things about him. One in particular was his good sense of humour.

“So since I’ll be getting there first, do I place our orders before you arrive?”

“Alright, that’s fine by me.”

“I am very hungry, but don’t worry, I’ll wait for you,” he chuckled.

“*Before?* You don’t have a choice o. See you soon.”

“Alright dear. Bye.”

“Bye.” She dropped the phone in the centre console, beside the gear. “This guy is not serious *sha*,” she caught herself smiling. “I’ll definitely get back at him,” she said aloud as she started the car.

“I heard you o.”

Gbemi didn’t know the call had not ended. She picked up the phone “oh goodness. I thought you hung up.”

“God catch you,” he joked “so that’s how you’ll be talking about me, *abi* (right)?”

“*Oya* bye bye. I’m driving.”

“Bye. See you soon.”

She ensured the call ended this time around before she dropped the phone. It took her about 40 minutes to get to the restaurant. It was about 20 minutes past 6.

She touched up her powder and applied her lip stick. She didn't want to look stressed out.

As she entered the restaurant, the cool air conditioned atmosphere of the place together with the aroma of well prepared food welcomed her. She looked round and spotted John. He was on the phone. As she walked towards him, he sighted her and immediately ended the call. He stood up and gave her a hug.

She perceived his cologne and liked it. "You smell nice." She smiled.

"Thank you, you look lovely too." His eyes scanned her from head to toe.

"Thanks." She suddenly seemed a bit shy but it lasted just for a moment.

"I'm so sorry for keeping you waiting." She quickly added.

"Nahhhh, it's fine, really. I got here about ten minutes ago. I decided to take my time after you called." He waited for her to take her seat before sitting down.

"Oh thank God. It's not my nature to keep people waiting." She explained.

"I understand. Just as we agreed, I placed the order. I decided to play safe so I asked for rice, I know that's your usual, hope that's fine by you."

"Absolutely. I hope it won't take forever before they bring it," she looked around to see if anyone was bringing the food. "I'm famished." She placed her hands on her tummy.

“See you, you can’t even form?” He made fun of her.

“Form *ke*? Because of what? *Abeg* (please) *o*, man must eat *na*.”

“I feel you *jare*, don’t worry they’ll soon bring it. What’s your best food by the way?”

“Indomie,” she said plainly.

John couldn’t believe it. “You are joking right?”

“Of course I am. I like rice, anything rice is fine by me. How about you?”

“I don’t really have a best food, I like almost every good food I’ve tasted,” he was very open and sincere.

“I bet you haven’t eaten Gizdodo before.” She smiled.

“Nope, what’s that?”

“It’s simply gizzard and *dodo* (fried plantain). You need to taste it, its heavenly,” she closed her eyes to emphasize how amazing it was, bringing back the memory of the taste.

“So when are you going to make it for me?”

“Who said anything about me making it for you? You are on your own o.”

She smiled. She had this glow. It had something to do with John’s presence. He brought out the best in her.

“We’ll see about that. Anyway, enough talk about food, how was your day?”

He asked.

Gbemi went on and on telling him how her day went and how annoying her boss was. She compelled herself to stop talking and asked, “how about you?”

“May day was ok, a bit challenging but fulfilling.”

“HmMMMM interesting. Tell me something about you, I don’t know.” She wanted to know more about this mystery man.

“Well, I studied architecture in the university which was some 7 years ago. Presently, I work with a private firm here in Lagos. But somehow, I’m beginning to perceive that my time there is almost up.”

“Up *as in* (in what way)?” She needed clarification. “Do you mean you are thinking of resigning?”

“I’m not sure. I’ve learnt to take things one step after another. Things will get clearer with time. You know it’s very important to know what God is saying per time and not just what He once said.”

“Yeah that’s true,”

The food arrived. It looked really good. Gbemi hoped it tasted as good. As they began to eat, she kept wondering at what point John was going to talk about the reason he wanted to see her.

“I know you must be wondering why I called for this,” he took a sip of juice.

Gbemi smiled as she dug into the well garnished meal before her.

“I was really intrigued by what happened the other day in the hospital. I saw what transpired between you and your dad and I was moved.”

She listened attentively.

He dropped his cutlery and continued speaking as he gesticulated with his hand. “I don’t know the full story of what happened and frankly speaking I’ll understand if you don’t want to talk about it, but hearing you tell your father you forgive him was amazing. I’m certain, God Himself must have stood up to jubilate,” he smiled.

Gbemi chuckled. “It wasn’t easy, I must confess. It took the help of the Holy Spirit. These last few weeks, I’ve been through some emotional hitches and so when I say it was God, I mean it. With regards to talking about it, well I have

realized that the moment I let go, it no longer had power over me. I had always bottled it up but now, it means little or nothing to me anymore.”

“That’s amazing. I’m so glad to hear that.” He smiled. “I have a request,” he paused to hear what she’d say.

“Okay... I’m listening,” at this point, she dropped her cutlery and paid full attention. She wondered what he wanted from her.

“It’s not that serious,” he smiled as he pointed to her food “please keep eating.”

“See you that is talking. Why have you also paused your eating?” She smiled and picked her fork.

“Okay see,” he picked his cutlery. “See, I told you it wasn’t that serious.”

She smiled. “I hear you. *Sha* (just) continue *jo*.”

“Okay. So there is this Christian NGO I work with, it’s called Ray of Hope Foundation. We are a group of Christians that reach out to young girls who have either been hurt, abused or molested. We’ll be having a seminar soon and I’ll love it if you can be a part of it.”

Gbemi didn’t see that coming. “*Me? How?*” She didn’t think she was capable. “A part of it in what sense?” She needed to clarify.

“There will be a section in the program where we’ll want the girls to listen to someone who understands what they have or are still going through and perhaps someone who will share her own experience. And I am convinced without an iota of doubt that you are the best for that.” He told her.

Gbemi sighed. She knew there was truth in what he said but she didn’t know if she could. “I really appreciate all these but I’m not sure I’ll be able to do it,” her countenance fell.

“Gbemi, look at me,” he was looking straight into her eyes. “You can do it. It was not a coincidence that, of all the people that you could have asked to follow you to see your dad, it was me you chose. Think about what your story will do to those young girls who have bottled so much within them. Who knows, the ray of hope they need might be in your story, a reason for them to know that they have a bright future in Christ.”

Gbemi knew the truth and what John had just said was nothing but the truth. “*So all I went through those years was for a purpose. God wants to use my experience to reach out to others.*” She began to reason within her.

She sighed again. “Please give me some time. I’ll get back to you as soon as I can.”

“No problem at all. Please take your time. No rush, no pressure.”

“Thank you”. But first, you yourself don’t even know the full story”

He chuckled and reclined in his chair, “You are right, I don’t. But I know that whatever it is, it was not your fault.”

Gbemi was speechless. Although she had been liberated from the yoke of her past, she never saw things in that light. “*It wasn’t my fault and so I must never again blame myself.*”

“Thank you,” she said with a smile.

“I don’t know what you are thanking me for but you are welcome. I’m good like that”, he laughed.

“Who has been deceiving you?” Gbemi joined him in laughter.

“My fans and we both know who my number one fan is?” He winked.

“That waitress *shey* (right)?” She pointed at the lady serving food adjacent to them.

“You are just in denial and you know it.”

They laughed.

“It’s getting late. We had better get going. You shouldn’t drive in the night,” John said with concern.

“Yeah you are right,” Gbemi wasn’t sure if he had brought a car or come through public transport and didn’t know how to ask. She had never seen him drive a car. “How are you getting back?” She finally figured a way to coin the question.

“I’ll find my way. Is it not this Lagos? I’ll be fine, thank you.”

He paid the bill and they both stood up and left.

“I enjoyed the meal,” Gbemi said as they stepped out of the restaurant.

“I told you I was going to make it up to you. Anyway, I’m glad you did.”

He walked her to her car and waited for her to get in, “So take your time to think and pray about what we discussed, I’ll be patiently waiting for your reply.” Those were the same words any lady would have loved to hear after a marriage proposal from a guy she liked.

Although that wasn’t the situation here, Gbemi had this sense of wholeness and didn’t feel like she needed a man to complete her, not because she hated men and intentionally shut them out like she previously did but because she knew her completeness was in God and God alone. Her life was gradually taking shape. She wasn’t going to run crazy if she didn’t have a guy in her life and she began to appreciate John for the true friend he was.

“Alright I will. Are you sure you don’t need a lift. I can take you to the closest bus stop,” she was willing to help.

“That’s so thoughtful of you. I actually came with my car,” he pointed to a black Hyundai. “But don’t worry, maybe some other time. You know, I enjoy riding with you. Take good care of yourself.” He waved at her and stepped back as she started the car.

“You too. Bye.” Gbemi had no idea he had a car, she just assumed he didn’t, probably because he got to church before her and left after her and most of their outings, he preferred using Uber or Taxify.

She got home pretty exhausted. She had had a long but fruitful day. She decided to place a call to John to find out if he had gotten home.

“Hi John, how are you? Have you gotten home?” Gbemi could hear music playing in the background.

“Nah not yet, maybe in another 20 minutes.”

“Okay, I got in some minutes ago. Thank you for today, I had a lovely time.”

“Me too. I’m glad you did. Don’t forget what we discussed.” He didn’t want to put her under pressure but at the same time, he wanted her to think about it.

“No problem, I won’t. Is that Fire Regalia by JayMikee?” She loved that song.

“Yes it sure is,” his response reflected he was smiling.

“I’m a huge fan. I love that song.”

“Wow that makes two of us.”

“Interesting, so we finally have one thing in common,” She wondered if there were more things they had in common.

“I bet it’s more than just one thing.”

“*Oya na* what again?” She wanted to know if there were really more.

“Ok, when is your birthday?”

“February 15. You?”

“October 24. That’s far from close. I’m sure there is something. You’ll see.”

He seemed so convinced and optimistic.

“Okay o. Anyway you shouldn’t be on the phone while driving,” she was concerned for his safety.

“I’m using my ear piece. Plus, I’m stuck in traffic.”

“*Eeya pele* (sorry). It is well. Anyway I just called to say thanks.”

“You are always welcome. Have a lovely night rest.”

“You too,” she ended the call. She cast her mind back on how the evening was and started smiling unconsciously. Then she remembered John’s request and the smile immediately disappeared.

“Oh Lord,” she prayed “I don’t think I’m up to the task. What will I say? I can’t do it,” she gave all manner of excuses. But as she went on and on, she remembered Mordecai’s words to Esther when she was reluctant to go before the king on behalf of the Jews. Mordecai told her point blank that help would arise from another source if she chose to remain silent and he made her understand that there was a possibility that she was in the palace for the purpose of being a voice for the Jews (Esther 4:14).

Gbemi sighed. She knew what that scripture meant; God Himself was telling her she was His voice to those young girls.

She could no longer utter any word of argument “Father, please just help me.” She rested her case.

Immediately, she made the decision, she felt joy unspeakable. She was convinced she was at the centre of God’s will.

“I’ll wait till tomorrow to tell John my decision,” she decided. *“Before my calls become too frequent,”* she thought.

The next day, as she parked her car at work, she remembered the decision she made but decided not to call first. *“The last thing I want is to appear forward. Whenever he calls, I’ll tell him,”* she decided.

There was a unique glow on Gbemi that day. It had nothing to do with her physical appearance. She wore a sky blue three-quarter sleeved chiffon shirt tucked into a black skirt and put on a 3” black shoe. This however was nothing different from the usual. Even her co-workers testified to the fact that there was just something different about her.

“Is there something you are not telling us, Miss Johnson. This one that you are just beaming. Has he proposed?” Mrs Aiku, the receptionist asked. Was that the only thing that could make a lady happy?

Gbemi didn’t allow anyone burst her bubble by asking her if a guy proposed. “What’s with people and guys proposing? I’m happy because God made me happy.” She said as she signed in. *“Society itself is enough pressure for a young single lady,”* she thought.

“Hmmm I envy this your happiness o,” Mrs Aiku, couldn’t keep it anymore.

“It’s very simple. The secret is Jesus,” she smiled.

“It is well o, have a lovely day.”

“You too”, Gbemi was done signing in. “Lord, let my light keep shinning for You always,” she prayed as she went upstairs.

Around 9:30AM, her phone rang. It was Bola, her younger sister.

“Hello.”

“Sis Gbemi, good afternoon,” Bola always had respect for her sister.

“Sisterly, how have you been?”

“Been good. How about you?”

“Same here sis. ”

“How is daddy?” She sounded concerned.

“Same same.” Gbemi tried not to be downcast.

“I feel I need to pay him another visit. I called bro Femi, he said he’ll pick me up and we’ll go together.”

“That’s really nice” she said. “He’ll be glad to see you after all, the visits can’t be too much.”

“*Abi* (exactly).”

“I would come to your place when I’m done. I have a couple of things I also want to do in Lagos before I return to Ibadan tomorrow hopefully.” She explained.

“Okay, that sounds cool. Around what time are we talking about, so I’ll know how to plan my day?”

“What time is convenient for you?” She did not want to inconvenience her sister who she knew ran a busy schedule.

“I have a prayer meeting in church from 5:30 to 6:30 this evening after which I’ll head straight home, but if that will be too late then I guess I’ll forfeit it this week.” Gbemi was always very sacrificial especially when it had to do with her baby sister.

“No, sisterly you don’t have to. I can do the running around first then come much later since I’ll be leaving early tomorrow morning. How about that?”

“Sounds great,” they finally came to a consensus.

“Alright sis, see you later.”

“Alright dear. Have a safe trip. Help me greet daddy, tell him I’ll plan towards paying him a visit soon.”

“Alright, no problem” she ended the call.

She continued working and hoped that Mr Kalejaye won’t try to mess up her plans today like he did the previous day.

By 4:50PM, she began to round off her work and by 5PM on the dot, she went to Mr Kalejaye’s office to tell him she was set to leave.

He looked up from his laptop. “Have you sent the document I asked for?”

“Yes sir, I’ve sent it to your email.” She had done everything he had asked her to do. “*This man must not delay me today in Jesus name,*” she prayed within her.

He looked at her. “It’s okay, you may go.”

“Thank you sir.” She was so happy. She left before he could say another word.

She left the office and headed straight for church. She didn’t want to be late for the prayer meeting. As she drove into the church compound, she spotted a black Hyundai that looked exactly like the one John drove the previous day.

“Is the guy stalking me?” She asked herself as she smiled and came down from the car. She checked her bag to confirm she had her bible and scarf. She knew those were not the prerequisite to come into the house of God but at the same

time didn't want lack of scarf make her appear disobedient or rebellious as it was required for all women in that church to cover their hair.

As she entered the building which on the average, sat about 100 people, she saw a group of people seated at a corner. She wasn't sure if it was the prayer band but as she walked closer, she sighted the leader and he stood up to welcome her.

“Brethren, we have a new member in our unit. Let's welcome sis Gbemi.”

They were all so warm and homely, the ladies stood up to hug her, “you are welcome sis,” they said one after the other and the guys gave her a hand shake, “we are happy to have you here.”

Gbemi felt so welcomed and loved, “thank you,” she kept saying as she hugged and shook hands briefly.

“You may have your seat,” the leader pointed to a free chair. They were seated in a circle. We are having Bible study. We usually spend this 1 hour studying the Word of God and afterwards pray together. We are studying Esther 4.” He handed her the Bible study outline.

“Thank you,” Gbemi said as she collected it and brought out her Bible and journal from her bag.

GBEMI

The unit leader faced everyone and went on, “So as we read, Esther’s timely positioning in the palace at that time wasn’t coincidental, it was divinely ordained. She could have been anywhere at that time but God chose to position her in the palace.” He explained with so much enthusiasm. “Why?” He asked rhetorically and went on to answer, “because he wanted her to be His voice.”

Gbemi froze in her seat. “*What?*” She couldn’t believe her ears. The exact same Word that God had dropped in her heart the day before, when she was praying concerning addressing the young girls. Gbemi was convinced it could only have been God.

People around her nodded rhythmically as their leader went on dividing the Word.

He went on, “God is intentional about the lives of His children. Nothing happens to us by chance. It may not make sense initially but keep holding on. God will make it beautiful in the end.”

Gbemi felt like he knew exactly what she had been through. The message was for her. She was stunned, too stunned to even pick up her pen to write. She just listened attentively, she didn’t notice when some two guys joined the meeting.

After the leader had finished talking, he asked everyone to stand up so they could pray together before bringing the meeting to a close. It was at that point Gbemi noticed John standing opposite her.

He saw her and smiled.

She smiled back and quickly closed her eye. They were praying. After the prayer, the leader gave some announcements and afterwards, they shared the grace.

Immediately the meeting ended, a lady walked up to John and engaged him in a conversation. Gbemi wanted to see him too so had to exercise patience. She sat back in her seat as she waited for him. She noticed he kept looking in her direction.

“Only God knows if he is listening to what the lady is saying.” Gbemi thought. *“listen-to-what-she-is-saying.”* Gbemi mouthed inaudibly and gesticulated with her hands holding her pinna when she mouthed “listen” and pointing to the lady who was backing her.

John who was facing her smiled.

The unit leader came to sit beside her, he noticed she was sitting alone. “Hope you enjoyed the meeting?” He asked.

“Yes I did. Very much.” Gbemi was so grateful she came.

“I’m glad to hear that. So am I seeing you in our next meeting?” He asked.

“By God’s grace, I’ll try to be here for the prayer before service tomorrow,” she said.

“Looking forward to seeing you then.”

“Are you waiting for someone?” He asked out of concern wondering why she was still seated.

“Yeah I’m waiting for him,” she pointed at John who was still kept engaged by the lady.

“Alright then, take care,” he stood up, “see you tomorrow.”

“Bye.”

After another long four minutes of sitting alone, she noticed John tried to end the conversation. She saw him pointing at her, perhaps telling the other lady that someone was waiting for him. He soon walked over to where she was.

Gbemi stood up to greet him.

He hugged her.

“I didn’t expect to see you here,” she expressed her surprise.

“I’m here every Tuesday evening for Bible study coordinators’ meeting.”
Usually we finish around the same time with the prayer band but today, we

finished earlier and as I was leaving, I just felt like joining the prayer band. I had no idea you were around,” he explained.

“HmMMM you didn’t know I was around huh?” Her question had a sarcastic tone.

“Absolutely none.” John was willing to convince her if he had to.

“Okay, I believe you... interesting,” she smiled.

“You can say that again. Hope you enjoyed the meeting?” He asked.

“I did, I felt it was meant for me.”

“Wow, that’s great.”

“Let me see you off, you should get going so your sister doesn’t have to wait too long for you.”

“That’s true. Can you imagine? I almost forgot she was coming.” She said as they walked towards the exit of the church.

After taking a few steps, Gbemi froze. “How did you know my sister was coming?” She didn’t remember telling him anything about that.

CHAPTER 9

John smiled, “I have my ways,” he continued walking, leaving Gbemi who remained stuck to a spot.

“No o, you are not going anywhere until you tell me,” she said as she tried to meet up with his pace.

“Ok I will tell you but first have you thought about what we discussed yesterday?”

“We discussed many things yesterday” She pretended not to know what he was talking about.

“*Ehn* like the gizdodo you are meant to make for me *shey* (right)?” He said sarcastically.

“Me I don’t know what you are talking about o”, she smiled. She was getting close to John quite alright but cooking for him was a whole different level entirely. “Alright alright, we both know you are referring to the seminar coming up.”

“Yeah?” John listened attentively as he stood beside Gbemi’s car.

She went on to tell him how on two occasions, Esther's story was what God used to convince her.

"So is that a yes?" He was so excited.

"I believe it is," she smiled.

"Thank you so much Gbemi, thank you."

"Ok so we had a deal. How did you know about my sister's visit?"

John began to scratch his neatly trimmed and sharpened hair. "You know we have the Holy Spirit in us who reveals all things to according to the book of..."

Gbemi cut in. "No no no, don't even go there. We both know that's not what happened." She smiled. "Better talk o, Mr Stalker," she was determined to get to the root of it.

"Promise me you won't be mad." He pleaded with his hands clasped together.

"Hmmm this is getting serious. Okay I *promi*." She intentionally didn't complete the word.

"Say it very well *na* Gbemi."

"I promise o, I've said it."

“I went to visit your dad in the hospital today. He had been on my mind for a while now and I thought I could just pay him a visit. I know I should have told you before going. I’m sorry.”

Gbemi didn’t know how to react. She had mixed feelings about what he did; she felt if at all he wanted to visit him, he shouldn’t have gone behind her back but on a second thought, his motive was what mattered most.

“Gbemi, are you mad at me?”

“After you made me promise?” A little smile broke out on her face. “But you should have told me first, you know?”

“I do, it won’t happen again. I promi.” He imitated her.

“*Miigbo* (I didn’t hear),” she held one ear.

“I promise,” he smiled.

“How is he?”

“He is good, he asked of you,” he told her.

“I’ll find time to check up on him,” she opened the door to her car. “I better get going, I shouldn’t keep Bola waiting.”

“Yeah true. Alright then. Bye”. He stepped aside and allowed Gbemi to enter the car and reverse. He waved to her as she drove off and she waved back.

On her way home, she called her sister to find out where she was and to tell her she was on her way home.

“Kola will bring me shortly.” Bola explained.

“Alright dear, see you soon.” She ended the call and began to think about what her sister would eat. She secretly hoped that she would have eaten already.

Bola arrived some twenty minutes after Gbemi. Gbemi was happy to see her.

“How are you?” She gave her a warm hug right at the door.

Kola was behind her carrying two bags. “Good evening Gbemi.” He dropped the bag in his right hand and extended it for a hand shake.

Gbemi ignored the hand and gave him a hug. “How are you? Good to see you again.” The first and only time they had met was during Bola and Kola’s introduction some months back. She was happy to see her soon to be brother-in-law.

“You are welcome,” she ushered them in. “What can I offer you guys?”

They came in. “We just ate,” Bola said.

“We are alright, thank you,” Kola said as he dropped the bags and sat down. “You have a lovely place,” he said as he admired the neatly arranged sitting room.

“Thank you,” Gbemi said as she sat down on a sofa which was opposite the three-seater the couple sat on.

Her sitting room had a cream and brown theme. The suede chairs were brown in colour, there was a furry centre carpet which was brown and cream then she had these long lovely drapes which were also cream and brown. This was a total contrast with her bedroom which was pink floral-themed.

Gbemi engaged Kola in a conversation. She asked him about his short term and long term plans. She listened attentively to how he shared with her about his priority being majorly to honour God in everything he does and wherever he found himself. He was also determined not to be a liability to his family or society but an asset. His career plans were outstanding too. Gbemi was impressed with his level of maturity generally but especially spiritually.

“That’s great, I’m really impressed,” she smiled and then looked at Bola and said, “better grab and hold him tight. He is a good man.” Gbemi wasn’t convinced just because of his carriage, composure, career plans and so on; she had a witness in her spirit that Kola was right for her sister.

Bola smiled.

“Kola before you get too excited, I hope you know what a gem you’ve got?”

She asked.

“Yes I do,” he held Bola’s hand and smiled.

After some more minutes of conversing, Kola left and told Bola he’ll come to pick her early the next morning.

Gbemi waited for him to leave before asking about their dad. “How is he?”

She asked hoping for the best.

Bola sighed. “He’s okay. Not much difference though but one could tell that he was really happy to see us again.”

“That’s great. We’ll just keep praying for him.”

“Yeah. Speaking of daddy, a guy came to visit him too, he said he’s your friend. I’ve forgotten his name.” Bola was bad with names. “Not too tall, fair complexion.”

“John.”

“Yes that’s his name.”

“He later told me.”

“Okay. Bro Femi dropped me off at Kola’s place and returned to work. I was able to do some shopping for the wedding and since I was coming here, I decided to bring the *asoebi*.”

“I’m glad you had a fruitful trip.”

“Yes o I did.” She pulled the large Ghana-must-go bag towards herself and opened it “These are the *asoebi*, there are two types. The cord lace plus gele is 10k while the Ankara plus gele is 4k. Most of my friends are in Lagos, so it will be easier reaching you. I’ll take some for those in Ibadan.”

“Alright, no problem.” Gbemi prayed for grace to do it. The sight of the clothes alone made her weak but she was determined to help out as much as she could.

They chatted a little bit more and both retired for the night.

The next morning, as early as 6AM, Bola was set and Kola came to pick her up as they had agreed.

“I’m going to miss you.” Gbemi said as she hugged her sister beside Kola’s car.

Kola came down from the car to help Bola carry her bag. “Thank you so much” he said to Gbemi.

“Thank me *ke?* I’ve been taking care of this girl since she was in the womb,” she joked.

They all laughed.

“Make sure you always keep in touch,” she told Bola.

“I will.”

They entered the car. She waved at them as they drove off.

She returned to her flat to prepare for the day, she didn’t want to be late. As she climbed the stairs, she met Gbenga. He was holding the hand of a cute little boy who must have been about three years old. The boy, whom she perceived was his son, was dressed in his school uniform, carried a little bag pack on his back and on the other hand, had a lunch box which most likely contained his food flask.

As she ascended the steps, she realized how liberated she was from the hurt Gbenga once caused her.

“Good morning Gbenga,” she greeted him.

“Good morning.”

She could still see the surprise on his face. He most likely didn't expect her to greet him. As they approached her, she paused and greeted the little boy.

“What's your name big boy?”

“Edward” he said with a winsome smile.

“That's good. Be a good boy at school okay?”

He nodded.

“You have a lovely son,” she spoke as if nothing had ever happened between them. “Have a beautiful day,” she said as she continued up the steps. She was totally delivered and she knew it. Keeping malice with Gbenga for what he did was so beneath her instead, she remembered the scripture that says:

‘Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing, thou shall heap coals of fire on him’ Rom 12:20.

She hurriedly prepared for work. She had a bad habit of skipping breakfast in order not to be late to work. Her mother had told her times without number how she needed to plan her morning well so she could have time to eat breakfast before the start of the day's activity.

“Gbemi, breakfast is the most important meal of the day. If you are not fasting, you shouldn’t miss it.” Her mum would say any time she called to check on her or when she came visiting.

The next day being Thursday, Gbemi made up her mind that she was going to pay her father a visit after work. She couldn’t go the previous day because she had to be at church and she didn’t want to be late so she told herself she’d see him the next day.

She bought some things for him and also paid off some of his bills which she knew increased everyday he slept on that hospital bed.

“Daddy, how are you?” She asked as she held his hand.

“Grateful for everyday my dear, I am privileged to see.”

Gbemi smiled, she knew exactly what that statement meant.

“It is well with you daddy. I brought these for you.” She lifted the bag which contained provisions. She didn’t tell him about the bill, it was her way of not allowing her left hand know what her right hand was doing.

“What did I do to have such beautiful children?” Tears gathered in his eyes.

“It’s the Lord’s doing, daddy,” she smiled.

“Femi and Bola came visiting on Tuesday,” he informed her.

“Yes daddy, I’m aware,” she said still holding his hand.

“And your friend, John.”

“Yeah he told me too.”

“So, have you given him a reply?”

“Yes daddy, I am convinced that this is what God wants for me” she said then paused “wait, you two discussed that much?” she was surprised.

“Congratulations dear, I’m really happy for you. He’s a good man”

“Thank ...you?” She said a bit confused. Why did he congratulate her? Speaking in front of those children was a huge responsibility coming her way and all her father could say was ‘Congratulations’ and tell her that John was a good man. “*This man is growing old way faster than we thought,*” she said to herself.

After spending awhile with him, she decided to leave. Her father was sleeping so she tiptoed on her way out, careful not to interrupt his sleep.

As she drove home, she remembered John had told her the day before that the seminar was in two weeks. She knew she needed to start preparing.

She spent most of the next two weeks praying and seeking the face of the Lord concerning the program. She didn't want to just speak from experience and so she constantly prayed for utterance.

The D- day finally came and as she stepped into the hall, she was amazed by what she saw. There must have been about two hundred young ladies in that hall. The most she had thought to meet was perhaps fifty.

She sat at the back and observed all that went on. She saw John at the other end of the hall. He was giving instructions to people ensuring everything went well. He looked good in his black suit. She saw him check his watch and bring out his phone from his pocket. Gbemi felt her phone vibrate, she opened her bag to pick it and saw it was John calling her.

“This guy hasn't seen me,” she said as she went out through the back door of the hall to receive his call. Normally, she'd have probably ended the call and sent a message informing him that she was around but somehow she decided to hear what he had to say.

“Hi Gbemi, how are you?” She could tell he was a bit apprehensive that she had not yet come.

“I'm fine thank you,” she replied. “Has the program started?” She acted as if she wasn't there.

“It’s about to, hope you are almost here.”

“I’m so sorry John, I won’t be able to make it. Something came up,” she pulled the exact stunt he’d pulled on her some weeks back.

“Ha! Gbemi what happened? What came up?” She knew that news disoriented him.

She burst into laughter. “So you know the feeling now.” She entered the hall and walked towards him then ended the call.

“I’ve been around for about 15minutes. I was sitting there.” She pointed at her seat. “I saw you were busy so I didn’t want to disturb.”

“Gbemi, you scared the poo out of me. Who would have thought you’d get me the way you just did?” He smiled. “It’s really good to see you,”

“Thank you.” Gbemi felt happy to be there. “This is a large crowd, I must confess.”

“Yeah it is. We are still expecting more though,” he said.

“Interesting.”

“Is our guest speaker developing cold feet?” He teased.

“No *jo*, I’m fine.”

“Definitely, for it is God that works in you both to will and do of His good pleasure,” he encouraged her.

“Thank you,” she felt better.

“Feel free to sit wherever you want. Just know that we’ll soon call you to the front.” He told her.

“I’ll be fine,” she wasn’t sure if she was telling him or trying to encourage herself.

Just as he said, in another thirty minutes, he mounted the stage and welcomed everyone. “Before we go on, we’ll like to give honour to whom honour is due, please jam those hands as we welcome our guest speaker for today, in person of Miss Gbemisola Grace Johnson.”

Everyone applauded loudly.

Gbemi had not heard anyone call her full name like that. Coming from John’s mouth, she could bet there was something special about the way he said it. She stood up and picked her bag to go to the front. An usher approached and collected her bag from her, guiding her as she went.

“You are welcome ma,” she curtsied as she pointed her seat to her and dropped her bag on a glass stool beside it. There was also a bottle of water and a glass cup on the stool.

“Thank you very much,” she said to the usher. She didn’t in her wildest dream expect to receive such a warm and elaborate welcome. She sat down.

“Also we have in our midst, Mrs Adeleke, the founder of Ray of Hope Foundation. Put your hands together as she comes up to give the welcome address,” John said.

Gbemi figured he must be the moderator for the program. She stood up to clap for the woman. An usher brought the woman’s bag and placed it on the stool adjacent to the seat on her left. The seat to her right too was empty.

John handed to microphone over to Mrs Adeleke and came down from the stage. Gbemi watched as he approached. “*What is he coming to tell me again?*” She asked herself.

He dropped his book and face towel on the glass stool to her right and stood in front of the chair. It was then she realized that he wasn’t coming to tell her anything but walking to his own seat which was the empty seat to her right.

“You look amazing,” he mouthed to her as they kept clapping for the middle aged woman on stage.

“Thank you,” she always liked that about him; the fact that he always admired her appearance. Who won’t like that? “You look good too,” she smiled.

“I get that a lot,” he joked.

“Go and sit down.” She gently brushed her elbow against his.

“Thank you, you may be seated.” Mrs Adeleke said into the mic. She went on to give the welcome address.

Like every moderator, John kept looking at his watch, to ensure she didn’t over shoot her time.

“I must not see you checking time for me when I get up there,” Gbemi jokingly told him.

“Gbemi, it’s like you don’t know how I’ve been longing to hear you speak. *If I hear say I check time for you (I dare not check the time while you are speaking).*”

Gbemi smiled and prayed in her heart, “Father glorify Yourself.” She knew by her strength, she could not do anything.

After about an hour into the program, it was time for Gbemi to speak. John went up to introduce her.

“I’ve known this young lady for a while now but just got the opportunity to really know her a few months back. She is beautiful in and out. Her life has really blessed and challenged me and I’m certain what God will say through her will bless you. Please welcome with me our guest speaker for today, Miss Johnson.”

Everyone applauded.

As Gbemi ascended the stage and saw the crowd, her heart was moved with compassion, she was grateful she didn’t turn down the offer. She thanked the organizers of the program for the opportunity to share her experience and she thanked God for being with her through thick and thin.

“Let us pray.” She led them to pray and afterwards, started speaking. She told them her whole story of how her father molested her and beat up her mother. She explained the gravity of the consequence on herself as an individual and also her perspective of life and relationship with people especially men. “I hated myself for a very long time, I felt useless, filthy and I saw myself as trash. I blamed myself for what happened to me. I bottled it up and told no one. Because of this, I hated men with a passion; I never gave them a chance. I completely locked them out. I lived like this for many years even after giving my life to Jesus. One day, He

came to my rescue. He helped me face my greatest fear and worst nightmare: the man that almost destroyed my life.” The keyboardist played softly in the background.

“I don’t know what can be harder than letting go of the pain of the past and forgiving those that hurt you but that was what I had to do. And it was at that point, I got total deliverance.” There was silence in the hall. “See my dear sisters, we may not be responsible for what happened to us in the past but we certainly have power over our past and we are responsible for the choices we make afterwards. You can either chose to let it keep you imprisoned or you can break through that gate and be free. The secret is Jesus. It was with His help, I could face my father and it was by His grace I could release him from my heart.”

Gbemi could see a few ladies wipe tears off their eyes. She went on “Was it easy? No, it wasn’t. Are there still moments I feel the pain? Well, occasionally but even at those moments, I run back to God and He gives me His peace and joy in exchange for the pain.” She went on encouraging them for the next fifteen minutes.

Let me conclude with this scripture which I have found so true “Jesus says to you who labour and are heavy laden come unto me and I will give you rest Matt 11; 28. His rest is all round and eternal, there is no condition attached, just come as you are.”

Gbemi felt led to make an altar call. She didn't plan to do so before but there was a stirring in her spirit. "He is still calling out to you today. If you know that you need this rest, why don't you take that step of faith stand up and come and meet with Jesus?"

She removed the mic from her mouth and began to pray in the spirit. There was no response from the crowd. She continued praying then a lady stood up, and then another one and another. They started coming out one after the other, until the front became full and they had to move chairs backwards. More than half of the ladies came forwards. Some went on their knees crying hard, others stood and just prayed within their heart.

John together with some officials went forward to where the ladies were and started praying for them one after the other. Some ladies fell under the anointing. It was powerful. Gbemi could not believe her eyes. She was amazed at what glorious things could happen when one chooses to obey and submit to God. She prayed for them and asked them to repeat after her; "Dear Lord, I surrender all at your feet, my hurts, my pains and my past. I take upon me your burden and choose to share your yoke. Be my lord and saviour and give me all round rest in Jesus name I pray," they repeated after her and all chorused "Amen."

John went up and took the mic from her, he announced, “everyone who said that prayer should follow the gentleman in white shirt, he’ll collect your details so we can also contact you and pray for you. As soon as you are done with that we’ll go briefly into question and answer session, Miss Johnson is still very much around to answer your questions.”

The ladies followed the man while a few remained on their knees for a while longer, crying and praying.

Gbemi didn’t know what to do. It was her first time.

John whispered to her to take her seat that he’ll call her up soon. “Don’t worry about the ladies still crying, the ushers will attend to them,” he told her.

Gbemi went to her seat and fell on her knees. She was in awe of what God had just done. “Father, I thank you for using a ‘nobody’ like me to do wonders. Lord I surrender to You. Please, continue to use me Lord. May my story always bless lives in Jesus name I pray. Amen.” She got up from her knees, sat down before she sipped water from the sparking glass.

After some minutes, she was called up for the question and answer session. The ladies were allowed to write down their questions and send it forward. This they did and she kept answering them. She didn’t know where the answers were coming from but she knew that every time she picked a question and read it aloud,

the answer flowed. After that, she called out her phone number and told them to be free to call her if they needed to talk about anything.

By 3:00PM, the program ended. She bowed her head to pray and immediately she finished, she turned and saw a few ladies hovering around her.

“Ma, please can we see you?” They asked.

“Together or individually?” She asked.

“One by one ma” They mumbled.

“Interesting....okay, but we’ll have to make it brief.”

“Thank you ma,” they chorused.

John, who sat to her right stood up to give the girls privacy and a seat to sit down, “please try to be brief he told them,” as he stepped aside.

Gbemi counselled them and prayed with them one after the other. She felt so much joy and fulfilment as she did.

After she had met with the last person, John returned.

“Gbemi, God is awesome. I have never in my life or in the history of Ray of Hope Foundation witnessed what happened today. God is certainly taking you places.”

“I’m still in awe myself. I could never in my wildest dreams have imagined anything this great. Thanks for encouraging me.”

“Trust me, it’s been God all the way. I hope you are not too tired though.” He knew it had been a long and exhausting day. “You definitely need to rest.”

“Yeah, I certainly do. Thanks once again. I better get going. We’ll see tomorrow right?” She asked.

“About that,” he paused. “Can we hang out tomorrow say after church?”

“Ummmm, let me see, don’t you have all those your meetings after church?” She didn’t want to be left alone like Alice in wonderland while he attends those his long meetings.

“Nope, no meeting tomorrow,” he assured her.

“Why? How come?” That was going to be the first time.

“Babe will you please answer my own question first?” he was getting tensed up. Gbemi could tell.

“Alright, no problem then. Don’t keep me waiting o,” she pulled her ear “I will not hear story tomorrow.”

“Yes ma’am,” he smiled.

She left and they agreed to meet the next day.

Gbemi wasn't as overly excited to be at church as she was the very first time she realized John 'existed'. She was cool, calm and collected. She looked good as usual, nothing loud or extravagant. She had a lovely time in church and after church waited in her seat for John to come.

"If this guy doesn't come to meet me, he should not think I'll go and greet him." She wasn't in the mood to queue with the other church members to talk to him. She had a feeling that she was not on the same level with them. "*Where is this feeling coming from?*" She wondered.

John managed to escape seeing people after church. He went straight to meet Gbemi where she was seated. He sat beside her brought out his phone and pretending to be on the phone said, "I hear, you have an outing with one fine dude this afternoon, is that why you look so beautiful today?"

Gbemi couldn't help but laugh. She brought out her phone too, pressed it to her ear and replied, "first of all, who says he's a fine dude? And secondly, duh I always look beautiful."

"What?" John put his phone down and faced her "everyone knows I'm fine. You are just too proud to admit it," he smiled.

“That’s because I’m the finer one.”

They both laughed.

“So are you set?” John asked.

“Yep.”

“Cool, so we’ll go in my car, then I’ll bring you back to church and from there you’ll go home. How about that?”

“Sounds like a plan. But like joke like joke, you don’t have any meeting,” she was still surprised.

“A man’s got to do what a man’s got to do.”

John drove them to a nice restaurant not too far from church, he placed the order but didn’t want Gbemi to know what he whispered to the waitress. “Add that one too,” he said as they finalized their secret plan.

“It’s only God that knows what you are planning now.”

“Nothing you don’t like, trust me.”

“Okay o, if you say so. You are lucky I’m not choosy when it comes to food,” she smiled.

The waitress brought their drinks and shortly after brought two plates of rice then a bowl which was covered.

“What’s inside the bowl?” Gbemi asked.

“Open it and find out for yourself.”

Gbemi opened it and found out it was her special dish, *gizdodo*. Her face lit up “Awwww you remembered how much I like it. I never knew they make it.”

“They don’t.”

“Then how come it’s here?” She said a bit confused.

“I made it and had an agreement that they’ll heat it up for me and serve it alongside their own dish cos I know how much you really like it,” he explained.

“Wow John, you are just amazing, so full of surprises. How did you learn how to prepare it?”

“YouTube.” He smiled.

“Hmmm smart one.” She was impressed.

She was however in for the greatest of surprises.

“Gbemi” his voice became a bit shaky.

“Yeah” she said without looking up, she was engrossed in the meal, she didn’t notice John had not started eating.

“Umm I’ll go straight to the point,” he said looking straight at her.

Gbemi immediately looked up and realized something was going on. She listened with rapt attention, her cutlery still in her hands.

“Gbemisola Grace Johnson, will you do me the honour of being my wife?” He asked without mincing words.

The cutlery clattered from her hand into the ceramic plate, a wave of heat went through her body. Did she just hear him well? For a moment, everything around her went still.

He continued “I love you so dearly and I’m so grateful you walked into my life. I want to spend the rest of my life loving you if you’d give me the chance.” That was it. He dropped the bomb.

Gbemi was speechless, “I don’t know what to say. I didn’t see this coming, at least not anymore.” Then it occurred to her, “*this must have been what dad was referring to when he asked what response I gave John and he congratulated me?*”

“Wait o, what exactly did you and daddy talk about when you went to visit him?” Gbemi had just put the pieces of the puzzle together.

John smiled but didn't reply.

“Oh goodness, how come I didn't figure it out? You guys did 419 for me,” she joked.

“But it was for a good course na,” he smiled. “So what say ye?” John had not gotten a reply to his proposal.

“Well, I'll need to visit the headquarters and thrash things out. Please give me some time.” Gbemi knew that she couldn't make such a crucial decision in a haste and she definitely needed God's approval. Right now, when her emotions were all over the place wasn't the best time to give an answer.

John understood, “no problem, please take your time. Just don't keep a brother waiting forever,” he smiled.

“*Ehen*, so you can brother zone yourself now *abi* (right)?”

They both laughed and continued eating. He dropped her at church as they agreed and they parted ways.

Exactly a week later, after church, Gbemi walked up to John and told him she wanted to see him.

He immediately left what he was doing and told the people waiting to see him that he had to attend to something important.

They went outside.

“So I have a message from the headquarters,” she started “but first, I perceive I want you to repeat your request,” she said naughtily.

John giggled “Is it the ‘Gbemisola Grace Johnson, will you do me the honour of being my wife?’ part or the ‘I love you so dearly and I’m so grateful you walked into my life’ part that you want me to repeat?” He asked smiling.

Gbemi couldn’t help but smile, it still felt like a dream. God gave her a man who loves and adores her despite her past. “I’d be honoured to be your wife, Mr John Adeniran, to be the mother of your children, your support and encourager.”

“Oh Lord,” he covered his mouth with his hand. He was speechless “You are heaven sent. Thank you thank you so much,” he hugged her not minding who was passing. It was high time those single sisters who were on his matter stepped back.

“Come,” he held her hand and took her towards his car, opened the door and they both sat down. He held her hands, “we are building this relationship on Jesus and His Word so I thought it will be great if we say a word of prayer.”

Gbemi couldn’t agree more.

They prayed, thanking God for what He had started and committing their future in His hands.

THE END

Gbemi

ABOUT THE BOOK

GBEMI is an intriguing story about a young lady, Gbemisola, who suffered from the impact her horrible past had on her. She hit rock bottom, had to face her greatest and most dreaded night mare. Will she pull through? This novel will move your heart and spirit. Burrow in and enjoy the warmth buried in the pages of this book.

"This is not just a story, it is a revelation that reflects how the past can affect the present and hinder us from seeing the bright future that God has for us. I recommend this book to everyone out there struggling with the pain and hurt of the past". -Damilola Mike-Bamiloye



ABOUT THE AUTHOUR

Emmanuela Evbuoma is a medical doctor, a writer and a drama minister who loves to channel her passion for writing as an inspirational life transforming tool. She desires to be able to reach the world with her writing. She loves children and youths and particularly has a burning passion for the female gender. She was brought up in a Christian family being the last of four children and the second of a set of twins.

