

Journey of a Sister



Year One: "The Truth!"

Featuring artwork and poetry by the Author

CEZANNE POETESS

Journey of a Sister

The Greatest Black Love Story Ever Told!

Featuring Artwork & Poetry by the Author



'Touching the Heart...through Art!'

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**'Journey of a Sister' is the Revised Edition of Cezanne's previously published novel
'Single, Spiritual...AND Sexual!' (2012)**

Front cover design: 'Black Butterfly' by Cezanne

Dedication

To my three 'suns' Zaviere, Sanchez and Azagba,
and for the Love of my people.

Hosea 4:6

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Introduction

Hi, this is Cezanne, Self-taught Visual and Spoken Word Artist, and Author of the Black Love novel **Journey of a Sister** which features my artwork and poetry.

Born in the UK of Jamaican parentage, I was raised in the Christian faith. By my mid-thirties, I'd developed a close relationship with my Creator, to the point where I was inspired to write loving messages from 'the Poet in the sky'. One of them, "*Look to Me!*" features in **Year One** of this story.

However, I began to question what I'd been taught to believe; in 2001 I was inspired to write a fearless letter to God, which also features in **Year One** of this story. I ended the letter by asking for "The Truth!"

Your QUEST for "The Truth!" begins when you ask the right QUESTions!

This marked a turning-point in my life; my poetry and art became creative expressions of everything I was discovering along the way.

While this book is loosely based on my own her-story, it's *not* my autobiography; 46,000 words were channelled, meaning they came *through* me rather than *from* me – and it's *packed* with ancestral wisdom!

Between 2007-2010 I learned how to meditate intensively; during the process I unblocked as an artist and painted my first collection '*Nature's Art*'.

I was inspired to use my artwork and poetry to illustrate this story. Links are at the back of the e-book to listen to my poetry and download my artwork, which incorporates Colour Therapy.

I used my painting '*Black Butterfly*' to illustrate the front cover because it's symbolic of 'Transformation'. The Adinkra symbol I've used at the end of each chapter is to remind you to look out for transformation in the following areas: her mind, self-identity, her hair journey, religion to spirituality, lustful sex to sacred sex, their individual personal development, and the transformation of their relationship.

This book is intended to take you on your own transformational journey of Self-discovery;

Introduction

You may notice that sometimes I capitalise the word 'Self'. This is when I'm referring to our Higher Self. If you're a believer you may call it the Holy Spirit; if you're non-religious you may refer to it as your in-tuition.

Journey of a Sister is available in e-book and audio-book formats; you may find it beneficial to listen and read at the same time. (See link in **Contents** to download the Audiobooks). At the back of the e-book is a £5 discount code towards your **personally signed hard copy**.

So without further ado, start your journey of Self-discovery!

In your service,



Visual & Spoken Word Artist | Author | Soul Purpose Tribe Leader

Spreading LOVE through Creativity!



'Sesa Wo Suban'

The Ghanaian Adinkra Symbol for 'Transformation'

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Self-reflection

It's a warm Spring evening in 2007. After tucking her boys in for the night, Suzanne climbs into her own bed and settles down to write in her journal:

'It's been three years since I broke up with Mark. Being on my own has given me plenty of time to think about what went wrong; now I can see that I had low self esteem, and he was only reflecting back to me my own lack of self-worth and insecurities – not to mention projecting his own.'

Now he's left me to raise our sons alone; how did I end up like this? I should've married Robbie when he proposed, he was the best thing that ever happened to me. But back then, I couldn't accept his love for me because I didn't love myself; I didn't feel 'good enough' for him. So instead, I allowed Mark to treat me the way I subconsciously believed I deserved to be treated. How would my life have been different with a handful of different choices? From now on, before I make any life-changing decisions, I'm going to seek counsel from someone who's had more experience in life than I have. I wish I could have relied on mum for that, but she's never offered any kind of advice other than bible scriptures – and that's not always practical when emotions (and hormones) are involved...'

She pauses to smile wryly.

As she thinks about where she is in life right now, Suzanne writes *'I feel like a caterpillar crawling through life– but even a caterpillar still has the HEART of a butterfly, and still aspires to fly...'*

As she writes freehand, a beautiful poem emerges about the process of metamorphosis; she likens the stages a caterpillar goes through to transform into a butterfly, with the process *she* must go through to transform her life. She titles her poem *'The Black Butterfly Effect'*.

Writing poetry is Suzanne's way of expressing her deepest emotions. Occasionally, she's inspired to write a poem which comes as a 'download', where she doesn't have to think about what she's writing; it comes *through* her rather than *from* her.

Over the past few years, Suzanne has done the inner work to uncover the root cause of her issues, and had put herself through a series of self-development

programs to raise her self-esteem and build self-confidence. She now carries herself better, has a more positive self-image, and loves and accepts herself unconditionally.

But her religious programming isn't about to be erased so easily; raised in the Faith, she still believes her sexual thoughts and feelings are sinful, which keeps her in a perpetual state of 'unworthiness' every time she thinks or acts out her natural desires. Being a young Scorpio woman, sexual sin is her weakness...her *spirit* is willing, but her *flesh* is weak. She's been celibate since her breakup but now, the thought of having a man around again is tempting.

Wanting to set a better example to her sons, Suzanne feels confident that she can now attract a man who will reflect her own raised self-esteem.

'...I'm in a much better place now, and I feel ready to try love again. What type of man would suit me best?'

While India Arie's '*Ready for Love*' plays softly in the background, she writes a list of all the qualities she desires her 'dream man' to have, before closing her journal and falling into a deep, peaceful sleep, smiling to her Self.



Self Love

The boys are at their dad's for the weekend; Suzanne is feeling more sensual than usual.

Lying on the sofa with her eyes closed, she slides her hand up her skirt, down into her panties, and begins pleasuring herself. She wonders why God created the clitoris; 'is it there for me to pleasure myself, or for my *husband* to satisfy me?' According to Suzanne's church, it's even a sin to masturbate, since the mind is likely to start conjuring up images of a sexual nature. If you so much as *think* about having sex, it's just as bad as *doing* the act.

With all these thoughts running through her mind, Suzanne can't help re-creating her imaginary lover, who visits whenever she needs a release. As she imagines him riding her silently back and forth, she increases the pressure and speed of her finger, while simulating sex on the sofa. With every withdrawal she lets out a sigh, and with each penetration, a deep moan...before long, she comes to climax, and he slips away before she even opens her eyes.

Suzanne feels like she's always sinning – she just can't seem to stay on the straight and narrow path! She doesn't understand why God would give her sexual desires then tell her to ignore them until she's married! What if she ends up being one of the women in the church who remains single, since there aren't enough men to go around?

The thought of never having sex again doesn't appeal to Suzanne! Why make her body desire sex if she's not allowed to have it until after marriage? No-one in church has been able to answer this satisfactorily, and whenever she asks her Heavenly Father directly, He always remains silent. So despite her 'weakness', Suzanne continues going to church, paying her tithes, studying her bible, and getting to know God personally so she can discover the reason He created her – her destiny.

It was only after having children of her own that Suzanne began to 'innerstand' God's Unconditional Love for her; she could do nothing wrong to make Him stop loving her. As her spiritual Father, He would advise her on how to live her life, but if she chose to do her own thing and 'fell', He would simply pick her up, dust her off, and stand her back on her feet again. And that's how they developed their relationship; *His* strength really was made perfect through *her* weakness!



The Rebellion

After a stressful day at work, collecting the boys from after school club, cooking dinner, and spending Quality Time with them before bed, Suzanne is finally able to sit down and relax. She switches on the TV to images of starving children in Africa, the latest report of another 'Black on Black' murder, and the state of the country's economy. Fear and anxiety begin to creep in. Suzanne wonders what's her reason for living; is it to live a meaningless existence, get saved, then spend the rest of her life looking forward to going to heaven?

"There's got to be more to life than this!" she thinks.

As a 'child of the King', Suzanne believes she's entitled to the best of everything, but instead, she's struggling to make ends meet. *'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof'*, so what's stopping her from claiming her piece of the pie? The devil. That's what the bible says; *'The devil comes to kill, steal and destroy'* anything good

that is due to her. The only way to stop him from stealing her good is to fight him every day. *'Put on the whole armour of God, so that you can withstand the fiery darts of the devil'*. That's what she had been taught, but Suzanne is tired of fighting.

'All I want is to get my life to work! What's the point of being a Christian if my life here *on earth* isn't better than a non-Christian? Why do I have to wait until I die and go to heaven?'

That evening, feeling brave, Suzanne decides to write God a fearless letter asking all the questions her church couldn't answer. As His child, she *should* be able to approach Him openly, since He could see what's in her heart and thoughts anyway. She's going to 'tell it as it is', and assuming there are others who would love to ask these *same questions* but are too scared for fear of His wrath, she stands in proxy for them.

She begins with 'The Fall of Lucifer' story, as this seems to be the root cause of all the world's problems. She re-tells it as *she* 'innerstands' it; that Lucifer, God's 'lead worshipper', the most beautiful angel of them all, got a bit egotistical and decided that *he* was worthy of some of this praise too; *'He obviously didn't understand why You Alone should be worshipped, and why everyone else has to bow to you! This is where all the trouble started...'*

She explains how Lucifer managed to get a third of the angels to join him in rebelling against God, which resulted in Him kicking them out of heaven. She asks why God hadn't banished them to one of the far distant planets in the galaxy and put some kind of force-field around it, so they couldn't reach His new creation on Earth? Instead, they had come and corrupted God's creation, as if He had no control over what Lucifer and his posse did!

She questions whether God really *can* kill Satan because if He could, surely He would have done it by now? *'...after all, You were quick to punish man when WE rebelled!'* – she even accuses God of showing favouritism!

She proceeds to analyze 'The Fall of Adam and Eve' story, again trying to get to the *root cause* of all the world's (and her) problems. After all, if it wasn't for Adam and Eve being tempted by the devil, we would all still be living in 'heaven on earth', as was originally intended. She reminds God that He made them in His *very own image* and created a beautiful garden for them to inhabit. He gave them free access

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to all the fruit of the garden – except from the tree right in the *middle* of the garden; the 'Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil'.

She points out that Lucifer also had free access to the Garden of Eden, and transforming himself into a serpent, successfully tempted Eve into eating of the forbidden fruit, and she in turn tempted Adam. Instead of God taking responsibility for leaving them unprotected, He *curse*d Adam and Eve, *evicted* them from their home, then sent them out into the Big Wide World, only to be tempted and corrupted by the devil even more!

It was only after banishing them that God placed a Guardian Angel at the entrance of the garden to stop them from coming back in, and to guard the Tree of Life (which was situated *right beside* the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil). Without access to the Tree of Life, Adam and Eve were doomed to death.

None of this makes any sense to Suzanne; she asks if the Tree of Life was more important to God than the human race?

She then questions *why* God had placed the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil right in the center of the garden, if they weren't supposed to eat of it; had He deliberately set them up to fail?

Suzanne suggests that even if the serpent hadn't come along, *curiosity* would have got the better of them sooner or later anyway; '*...As a mother, I know that if I place a handful of sweets in the middle of a table in the middle of the sitting room and then told my children "Don't eat those sweets!" and just left them there for weeks and weeks, I guarantee that it would only be a matter of time before those sweets started disappearing down their throats!*'

She argues that her children would eventually take the risk of whatever punishment they would have to suffer later, just for that moment of pleasure. She continues; '*...Now what if I then said to my children "Right, because you ate those sweets I'm not going to give you any dinner for a week!" wouldn't You think I was being a bit – harsh?*'

Standing in Adam and Eve's defense, Suzanne claims they were naïve, inexperienced, and gullible. They didn't stand a chance against the guile of His enemy, and the punishment served on them far outweighed their actions.

Instead of making them feel as if it was *their* fault Satan came to tempt them, she thinks God should have *apologized* to Adam and Eve for putting them in such

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jeopardy in the first place! Instead, He cursed the whole of the human race, and now generations later, we are still suffering because 'Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit'. But does the punishment really fit the crime?

The intensity of her Scorpio energy flows unto the pages as she continues her critical examination of what she had learned from years of studying the bible. She points out that the world has been in a state of anarchy literally since the beginning of time; *"The bible has barely begun, when already there's disobedience, damnation, murder, incest, war, famine and woe! But who's really to blame here; man, the devil, or dare I say it – YOU?"*

At this point she cringes as if waiting to be struck by a bolt of lightning.....when it doesn't happen, she continues more boldly.

Referring to another scripture, she asks *why* God had instructed her not to react to people who act wickedly towards her? Instead, she was expected to see 'past the flesh' and deal with it from the spiritual realm, since they are just 'pawns in the devil's game'. She tells God she has a problem with that, since He had consistently throughout the bible reacted to flesh and blood people, destroying them when He could no longer stand their wicked ways! She reminds Him of Sodom and Gomorrah and The Flood, two occasions where God in His anger, had wiped out whole populations:

'...But You didn't kill SATAN, the ORIGINATOR of the corruption, so when the earth became re-populated, the whole cycle just started all over again!'

Pausing to think about this, she writes;

'I'm not sure I even believe this story, as I don't think You would be so naïve as to believe that by wiping out the whole of humankind without destroying the ROOT CAUSE, you would ERADICATE the problem? You are far too wise a God to not see that...'

For a moment, she seems to come back to her senses as she watches the sun set through her window, turning the sky a beautiful hazy blue-red. But returning to her journal, her questions instantly resurface. After reminding God that the battle is in fact between Him and the devil and doesn't really have anything to do with *us*, His creation, she points out that the war is getting worse and worse;

'People are being murdered, raped, tortured, beaten; children are starving, going missing, being abused, corrupted, killed! The earth is dying from pollution, there's

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famine, earthquakes, and polluted water and air everywhere, and there's a big hole in the ozone layer! This isn't the world that You created for me to live in, I was meant to live in peace, harmony, joy and happiness with You and my fellowmen...the fact that there's some devil making my life a living hell isn't my fault, I didn't create him, You did! So why don't You take responsibility, and protect me when You see him coming for me, like the Loving Father you're meant to be?'

Pausing to reflect on what she has just written, Suzanne cringes at the thought of what would happen to her if she allowed *her* children to be abused by some crazy tyrant. Wouldn't she be held accountable? So why not God, the ultimate Heavenly Father?

She challenges God to look at His own faults;

'How many mistakes have you made in YOUR lifetime? I'd say putting Your adversary on the same planet as Your new creation has to be the BIGGEST MISTAKE OF ALL TIME! What did You expect Satan to do? Leave us alone, knowing we were made in the image of the person he hated the most – You?'

Desperately seeking to know God's thinking behind His decisions, she implores;

'...I know Your ways are not my ways so please, help me to understand...'

Suzanne asks why God wasn't supplying all her needs as promised in His word; *'...We're expected to 'wait on You' – and we have no way of knowing when You're going to come up with the goods! So many times I've waited on You, believing and praying for my miracle...and when it doesn't happen, we're expected to resort to the conclusion that it was just 'not God's timing'. You seem to play with us like we're a chess game, only moving when it suits You!'*

She again implores; *'I want to know and understand You more; I want to understand Your ways...'*

She recalls the times she had walked closely with God, thinking they had been the most beautiful; *'...I mean, there's nothing like waking up in the morning and feeling Your presence all around me, or being inspired to write a piece of poetry – but I want more: I want a big house! I want nice clothes! I want to be able to go on holiday yearly with my family, buy myself a decent car, have plastic surgery to correct all those things You got wrong with me...'*

Suzanne acknowledges that it's probably due to her lack of 'the fear of the Lord' why she's *not* walking in His blessings. Still, she wants to know *why* she's expected to do God's will without questioning His Word;

'...What good is a 'free will' when you demand that I do things Your way? What kind of a free will is that, anyway?'

She demands the answers to her questions through her sheer *will power*.

In all honesty, Suzanne loves the Lord and desires to serve Him 'in spirit and in truth', but the truth is, she's finding it hard to put her trust in Him totally and follow His ways:

'...I know your Word; I've read it, spoken it, meditated upon it, memorized it, and I still have so many needs! Is it because I didn't BELIEVE enough, or perhaps I didn't PRAY enough, or maybe I just didn't have enough FAITH? All I want to do is live the life of my dreams, is that asking too much?

Why can't I just live in heaven – on EARTH?'

Because she has experienced God as being Pure, Unconditional Love, Suzanne is confident that she can approach Him in this way. She had been finding it difficult to match the 'Jekyll and Hyde' character in the bible with the God *she* has developed a relationship with; her letter is a test to see whether He'll now switch on her. She concludes her letter by stating that although Lucifer took a third of the angels with him, there are still *two thirds* left in heaven with God! She tells Him that she believes He's mightier than the devil, and since He has twice as many angels, where's the battle, really? She writes her last lines; *'...You know, the more I think about all of this, the more I realize these stories just don't sound true, nor do they reflect the character of You, so now what I really want is...the TRUTH!'*

Feeling pleased with her Self, Suzanne titles her letter '*The Rebellion*'. Writing it had felt cathartic; she has put it 'out there', and now she will wait for His response...



God's Reply

The following morning as soon as Suzanne wakes up, she feels inspired to write. Picking up her journal and pen occupying the space of her 'dream man' on the bed, she turns over a fresh page:

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*Think on My Love,
Think on My goodness,
Think on My grace,
And all the things I've done for you.*

*When you think on these things,
Your problems will become small
Your mountains will become molehills
And everything you aspire to WILL become reachable.*

*Don't look at your situation,
Look to Me.
You can do all things, through Me.
I Am the Way that makes crooked paths straight
I Am the Key that unlocks the doors
I AM the Great I AM.*

*Do not fear when trials come your way
Do not bend when temptation is at your door
Always remember that in trials there are testimonies,
And no TESTimony without a TEST.
So don't be discouraged,
Don't feel downhearted,
Be of good cheer
And always remember that in Me
There is victory.*

The 'Poet in the sky' responds promptly, and in a language she can relate to – poetry! As she's writing, she can feel God's presence surrounding her like a warm, velvet cloak, as if comforting her. Tears roll down her cheeks as she writes a letter of apology back, for allowing herself to lose focus.



Synchronicity

The following week, Suzanne is at a community event test-marketing her new Inspirational Posters. A councillor from the local Chamber of Commerce visits her table.

"Hi, these are nice, did you design them?"

"Yes, I wrote the poetry too; I thought I'd print a few to see how well they'll sell."

"Good idea! The International Caribbean Trade Expo would be a great place to do that, but you'll need to print a lot more! It's taking place in the Docklands next weekend, I'll give you a number to call to book a stand if you like?"

"Yes please!"

He writes a number on the back of his business card and hands it to her.

"Mention my name, they might give you a discount."

"Thank you, I will!"

"Good luck!"

He smiles, waves, and walks off.

Suzanne calls her sister Janice and asks if she wants to go halves on the stand; Janice travels to places like Egypt, Africa and the Caribbean to buy things of black interest to sell.



The Caribbean Expo

Thousands of people flock to the venue in the Docklands over the two-day event. There's a buzz of excitement in the auditorium as hundreds of stall-holders, including Suzanne talk excitedly with their prospective buyers. Fashion shows, workshops, hair care demonstrations, performances and inspirational talks take place at designated times, including a key-note speech from the Jamaican High Commissioner. All these divert the crowd's attention from time to time, yet still, Suzanne makes over three times as much money as she had invested in her half of the stand and printing her posters. This is a great launch to her business, but that's not the only reason this event will go down in her-story...

She notices him first from across the room; he seems to stand out in the crowd like a neon light, appearing head and shoulders above everyone else. As he approaches, Suzanne begins to feel all hot and flustered; butterflies flutter around in

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her stomach, her heart starts pounding, palms are sweating ...does she even know this guy?

He's now just a few feet away, close enough for her to see that she *doesn't* recognize him, and at over six feet tall he really *is* head and shoulders above everyone else! She then realizes he's not heading towards *her* stand, but the 100 Black Men of London opposite! She calls out to him impulsively.

"EXCUSE ME!"

He turns, sees her waving at him, and begins walking towards her. She suddenly feels nervous; *'What am I doing? I'm not in the habit of pursuing men – plus, I'm meant to be working!'*

As their eyes meet, she flashes him a huge inviting smile. He accepts her invitation. She thinks he's attractive, and he thinks she's attractive too. She flicks her hair.

"Hi, I thought you might be interested in my posters!" she quips over-enthusiastically.

"Hmmm....they're nice, are these *your* poems?"

"Yes."

He stands silently, reading one.

"I can tell, you're deep," he comments when he's finished.

Suzanne laughs.

"Would you like one?" she asks.

"How much are they?"

"Well you can buy one for £4.50, two for £8.00 or three for £10."

He chooses three different designs and pays her the £10.

"My mum will appreciate these," he says gratefully.

"What made you come here today?"

She tries to prolong his stay by rolling the posters up slowly, before putting an elastic band around them. Neat, heavy eyebrows adorn his sparkling dark brown eyes. He's dressed smart-casual in a pair of jeans, shirt and polished shoes. As she hands him the tube he smiles with full, luscious lips, revealing perfect white teeth against his dark chocolate skin. But it wasn't his *looks* that had attracted her to him in the first place – in fact, she couldn't quite place her finger on *what* it was.

"My friend invited me."

He points to another brother at the 100 Black Men of London stand opposite.

"So how long have you been doing this?" he asks, indicating towards her poster display with his tube.

"I've only just started actually, you're my..."

She clicks her number counter;

"...twenty-eighth customer!"

"Congratulations! What were you doing before this?"

"I used to work in Admin, but I recently left my job so I could focus on starting my own business."

"Wow, sounds pretty much like me..."

As he proceeds telling her *his* story, Suzanne suddenly notices that the whole room has become silent, as if they're the only two people in the room, and she can only hear *their* conversation! Everything around them has become like a blurred whirlwind, as if they're caught in some kind of time warp. In the few moments that they converse, they share information about themselves as if they had known each other for ages.

"...I have to go – do you have a card?"

He bursts the imaginary bubble, and the room returns to normal. Suzanne picks up one of her home-made laminated business cards from the table and hands it to him. He smiles at her slogan '*Touching the Heart...through Art*'.

"I'll call you," he says with promise in his eyes.

"I'll look forward to it!" she smiles encouragingly.

"My name's Charles, by the way."

He extends his hand; they shake hands quite formally, but there's a lingering in the time they should have let go.

"I'm Suzanne."

As he walks across to meet his friend, Janice asks "Who was THAT?!"



He Calls

Two days later, true to his word, Charles calls. Suzanne is in the living room watching The Oprah Winfrey Show while her boys, Micah and Elijah play on the floor noisily. A number pops upon her mobile phone which she doesn't recognize, and she

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instinctively knows it's him. The boys hadn't come up in their conversation at the Expo; she jumps up to leave the room, calling out to them on the way;

"BE QUIET!"

She puts on her business voice;

"Hello, Suzanne speaking?"

"Hi Suzanne, it's Charles – remember we met at the Caribbean Expo?"

"Oh hi Charles, of *course* I remember, how could I forget? Nice to hear from you!"

He senses the genuine appreciation in her voice and responds to it;

"I couldn't wait to call, but I thought I'd give you a couple of days to rest after your busy weekend, how was it?"

"Great! I made a huge profit, and lots of new contacts too – including you!" she answers excitedly.

"How many other 'contacts' did you make?" he asks as if defending his territory. Suzanne laughs.

"Not like that, I mean *business* contacts!"

"Oh, that's alright then – so I don't have any competition?"

She can see where this is heading;

"Could you do me a favour, can you call back after eight please? Once the boys are in bed I'll be able to talk with you properly – is that okay?"

"Oh, I didn't know you had children! How old are they?" he asks in a surprised tone. Judging from her slender figure, he'd figured she was childless.

"Six and eight", she answers cautiously.

"Oh okay, I'll call back later then."

As Suzanne presses the 'end call' button, she wonders whether he *will* call back? He obviously hadn't banked on her having children.

After dinner, spending 'Quality Time' with the boys reading, finding out how their day at school was, and praying with them before putting them to bed, Suzanne returns to the living room and sits down to relax. She glances at the clock; it's 8.30pm. Just as she's about to think 'I *knew* he wouldn't call back' her mobile phone starts ringing – it's him!

"Hi Charles! Thanks for calling back – and sorry about earlier."

"Nothing to be sorry about. Are you okay to talk now?"

"Sure, what would you like to talk about?"

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"Well I'm not one to beat around the bush – are you single?"

She can hardly believe he's still interested!

"Yes, but I'm not about to jump into a relationship with you, if that's what you're thinking," she says though.

Charles isn't deterred;

"No, of course not...I'd just like to get to know you better, how do you feel about that?"

Suzanne relaxes and smiles.

"Yes, I'd like to get to know you better too."

"So tell me more about yourself; I know you write poetry, you're starting your own business, you have two sons, and you're a beautiful, smart woman. What else do I need to know about you?"

Suzanne laughs nervously.

"If you had called me beautiful a couple of years ago, I would have said you were lying!"

"Why?!"

"I grew up being called 'the ugly duckling of the family'. I had to do a lot of work with positive affirmations to change my inner programming."

"Well I wasn't lying...beauty is in the eye of the beholder – and I think you're gorgeous!"

"Thank you! What about you? Tell me more about *your* self – do *you* have any children?"

"No, not yet."

"Okay...how do you spend your free time?"

"Well, I go to the gym most mornings before work; I'm an Accountant by day, but I also like to study numbers in my spare time – Numerology to be exact. Numbers fascinate me."

"Ugh! Maths was my worst subject at school! What do you find so fascinating about *numbers*?"

"Well, everything in the universe is based on mathematical precision. To understand life, you must understand numbers. For instance, knowing your Life Path Number can help you to discover and fulfil your soul purpose."

"What's a 'Life Path Number'?"

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"It's the most important number relating to your birth."

"Oh...why?"

"Because it reveals the road map to your life; if you follow the Path, it can lead you to your destiny."

"But is our destiny pre-ordained, or can we create it?"

"Good question Suzanne, I can see I'm going to enjoy our conversations! You're right, we all have the freedom to live our life as we choose; we can either reach our full potential, or make some smaller version of our Self – but our true purpose is contained within from the moment we are born, just like a seed, waiting to grow."

"How can I find out *my* Life Path Number?"

"I can work it out now if you like? It won't take a minute."

"Okay then!"

"Great! What's your date of birth?"

"That's a sneaky way of trying to find out my age! Why didn't you just ask?"

"Oh, this will tell me much more than your age, you'll be like an open book before me! Do you still want me to continue?"

"Only if we do yours as well."

"Deal!"

"Okay, my date of birth is 9th November 1979."

"Oh, you're 28 like me! Gimme a minute..."

Charles works out her Life Path Number in less than 60 seconds.

"Ah, I see! Suzanne, your Life Path Number is 1!"

"Okay...what does that mean?"

He refers to his book on Numerology;

"You're a 'natural born leader, you demand freedom of thought and action; you have drive and determination; you don't let anything or anyone stand in your way once you are committed to your goal; you are exceptionally creative and original, and possess a touch of the unusual. Your approach to problems is unique; you have the courage to wander from off the beaten path. You perform best when left to your own devices; ideally you should run your own business and be your own boss. More often than not, a person with a '1' Life Path Number will achieve much in life as long as the tenacity, creativity, originality, and pioneering spirit are fully employed.' Sounds like you're on track!"

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"That's amazing! It reminds me of my Natal Chart report; *I'm* fascinated by *Astrology*."

"Yes, Numerology and Astrology are similar sciences; Astrology deals with how the planets were aligned when you were born, while Numerology deals with the numbers in your birth date."

"How did you work out my Life Path Number?"

"It's simple; all I did was add up all the numbers in your date of birth, then reduced them to a single digit...I'll show you how when we next meet."

"That sounds promising! Okay, now it's your turn; what's *your* date of birth and Life Path Number?"

"Oh, I was born on 24th of February 1979, and my Life Path Number is 7."

"Oh, you're a *Pisces*, that's supposed to be one of my best matches!"

"Says who?" he replies cheekily.

"Astrology; so tell me, do the numbers in Numerology match up, like Star Signs?"

"They do say some numbers are more compatible than others, but just like Astrology, you should only use them as a *guide* to help you understand yourself and others better, rather than making conclusions about a person based on their Life Path Number or Star Sign."

"I see...so are 1 and 7 compatible?"

"Well, they do add up to 8, which is the number for infinite abundance, but like I said, it doesn't always work that way...Suzanne, it's been really nice talking with you, I'd love to carry on this conversation over dinner if you like...what are you doing on Saturday?"

"It's my weekend to have the boys, but I'm free *next* Saturday."

"Great, it's a date! Whereabouts do you live?"

"North London."

"I'm South of the river, I'll drive over and pick you up – but don't think I won't be calling you every day until then!"

Suzanne laughs.

"Great, I'll look forward to it!"

"Me too. Goodnight Suzanne."

"Night Charles."

Their relationship was foretold in the Numbers and written in the Stars...so why didn't they see what was coming?



First Date

The day of their date finally arrives. Charles had said he would pick Suzanne up at 6pm, and sure enough, his black Mercedes pulls up outside her house at almost six o'clock on the dot. Suzanne looks excitedly in the mirror one last time to make sure her hair and make-up are intact. It's a warm summer evening; Suzanne is wearing a red figure-hugging sleeveless dress, which stops just above her knees. High-heeled red sandals, red lipstick and nail varnish finish off the look, coupled with diamanté earrings. She's carrying a light jacket in case it gets cold later. Her clothes aren't expensive, but she looks and feels like a million dollars; she knows how to buy clothes cheap, not buy cheap clothes.

As she steps outside and pulls her front door shut, Charles waits by the passenger side of his car with the door open. She kisses him lightly on the cheek before getting in. After making sure her dress doesn't get caught, he shuts the door firmly, gets in the driver's seat and starts the engine.

"Bang on time!" she commends him.

"D'you know how much I've been looking forward to today?"

"Me too! So where are we going?"

"First I'm taking you to dinner, and then I have a surprise for you!"

"As long as it doesn't involve ending up at your place!"

A pained look crosses Charles' face. He takes a deep breath before replying;

"Suzanne, let me explain something to you; I've been waiting a long time to meet a lady like you, someone I can vibe with, connect with, hold a decent conversation with. I don't just see you as some woman I picked up randomly, okay?"

"Okay – sorry if I offended you."

"No offence taken, I just wanted you to know, you mean more to me than that."

He presses the play button on his stereo before driving off; '*Sweet Lady*' by Tyrese starts playing.

"Oh, I love this song! You like soul and R&B as well?"

"Yeah, I much prefer listening to indie artists and songs from the 80's and 90's; the frequencies sound much better to me."

"I agree!"

He takes her hand and places it on the gear stick of his car, placing his hand over hers so she can help him change gears. They smile at each other.

"I tell you what; I'll make up a compilation CD for you with all my favourite songs," he suggests.

"And I'll do one for you!"



First Date Part One:

Charles pulls up outside a rather posh-looking Thai restaurant in Muswell Hill. They follow the waitress to their pre-booked table; he pulls out a chair for Suzanne to sit down before excusing himself to use the men's. She admires the ambience of the place; it has a warm, cozy atmosphere with soft piano music playing in the background.

Charles returns, and the waitress brings the menus. As Suzanne looks through the meal options, he makes his recommendations;

"Do you want to try the mixed platter? I always have it when I come here, I like the variety."

"Alright then!"

She likes a man who knows how to take control in a situation without dominating, if you know what I mean.

"What would you like to drink?" he asks.

"Water for now."

"Me too."

Charles calls the waitress over and orders their meal and a bottle of spring water. While they're waiting for their food to arrive, Suzanne pops the question she had been waiting to ask face-to-face;

"So Charles, why don't you go to church?"

A bit taken aback, he pauses before replying;

"Well I used to, but I kinda grew out of it."

"What do you mean you 'grew out of it'?"

"I got to a point where I just couldn't keep ignoring the facts."

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"What facts?"

"Are you sure you want to hear this?"

"Yes, go on!"

"Well, when I was a boy my father was my greatest influence; I spent the first 10 years of my life being raised in his village in Ghana. My mother often took me and my two sisters to church with her, but religion didn't play a key role in our household. My father made sure I learned about all the black heroes who had dedicated their lives to liberating Black people from white oppression, like Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, and Kwame Nkrumah. Having strong Black male figures in my life meant I didn't have to look to a white man to save me."

"I don't look to a white man to save me either!" Suzanne butts in.

"Are you sure? When you think of Jesus, what colour is he?"

"I don't see any colour," she replies flippantly.

Charles asks Suzanne to close her eyes, before saying the name 'Jesus'.

"Now tell me, what do you see?"

Suzanne opens her eyes and stares at him blankly.

"Hey, I'm not saying I don't believe in Jesus..." Charles assures her;

"...It's just that I have a problem with the white image they portray."

"Does it matter what colour he was?" she asks defensively.

"Of course it does! This 'white saviour' image that's been forced on our people has caused major damage to our people's psyche. Now it's like we can't do anything without the white man! Even our African leaders rely on him for things they should've been able to do for themselves. That's why Africa, our Motherland is in such a mess."

"Wait, how did we get talking about Africa when the question was 'why don't you go to church'?"

Charles takes a deep breath before replying;

"Suzanne, I'd rather not fall out with you over religion."

"I just want to know why you don't go to church, that's all."

He sighs deeply again.

"Okay. So I grew up with a Pan-Africanist father, and a Christian mother. My father died when I was 10, and my mother returned to England where they first met. She carried on taking us to church with her, but I never forgot the stories my father told me, about how religion was used to steal the wealth of Africa."

Suzanne laughs sarcastically.

"How was *religion* used to steal the wealth of Africa?"

Charles re-tells the story his father had told him, of how European missionaries arrived in Africa in the early 1800's with thousands of bibles, claiming to 'spread the gospel'. In truth, their mission was to use religion to mentally enslave those natives who had escaped the Transatlantic Slave Trade. They were forced to believe their African spirituality was evil, and that they needed to be saved. In the 1600's, Christianity had been whipped into enslaved Africans who didn't accept it willingly, but there were still plenty of Africans who practiced their own spirituality. In order for their plan to succeed, Europeans had to convince Africans that they needed a white saviour, and that they shouldn't desire earthly treasures. This would make it easy for them to usurp the wealth-creating resources of their land. By tricking Africans into believing that they should live a humble life on earth, and wait until they get to heaven to receive 'riches untold', they were able to walk away laughing with their gold, diamonds, oil, and other natural resources. Charles recalls an African proverb his father used to say:

**"THEY had the bible and WE had the land,
Now WE have the bible and THEY have the land!"**

He went on to explain how the economies of the Dutch, Portugese, French, British and the United States of America were all built on the backs of enslaved Africans and by raping his Motherland, under the banner of Christianity.

"Surely Christianity isn't *that* bad, lots of people benefit from having something to believe in," Suzanne defends her faith.

"Maybe, but your ancestors suffered and died because of it. They were lynched on trees, and now *you're* expected to forget about them and worship a white saviour who hung on a wooden cross for you instead! You were stripped of your identity and told you have a new identity 'in Christ'. Where did your surname come from?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well it's not African, so how did you get it?"

"It's my *family* name."

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"No, it's a *slave-trader's* name. Your ancestor's names, language, culture, spirituality, their very *identity* was stripped from them. They were branded, bought and sold like cattle. You should learn your history Suzanne. You're a displaced African, you should find your roots."

Suzanne sighs wistfully;

"I saw the film '*Roots*' once, but I never identified with any of those people as being my *ancestors*...my mother never mentioned anything about coming from Africa – she's a proud West Indian."

"Well, where exactly *is* 'West India'?" Charles asks, looking bemused.

"What's *your* surname?" she responds defiantly.

"Ankrah. My Ghanaian name is Kwame."

"Oh, I thought you were West Indian like me - you don't *look* African!"

"I'll take that as an insult...is it that I look West Indian, or that *you* look African?"

"Sorry, I didn't mean to offend you – you should be proud to be African."

"I *am* proud to be African! I can trace my ancestry as far back as ten generations on my father's side. But my mother, who's from Barbados, can only trace her lineage as far back as her great-great grandparents. Where are your parents from?"

"They're both from Jamaica."

"Do you know where they're from originally?"

"That's as far as I know."

"Maybe you could try and trace your ancestry?"

"I wouldn't even know where to start!"

"Well, perhaps you could start by visiting Ghana with me. Most of the enslaved Africans were transported from there. They're your ancestors."

Suzanne laughs sarcastically.

"Me? Go to Africa? I don't think so!"

"Why not?"

"Well for one, I don't like the idea of sleeping in a mud hut – and all those flies!"

"You watch too much 'tell-lie-vision', it's not like that in real life – they only show those images to put you off going back home, to your Motherland."

"Africa isn't my home, I'm Jamaican."

Charles sighs deeply. Placing his hand over hers on the table he says;

"It's a shame to see how disconnected the descendants of enslaved Africans are from their ancestral roots. If you want, I can help you find your way back home."



Part Two: First Performance

After their meal, Charles drives them to another venue.

"What is this place?" Suzanne asks curiously.

"It's called 'The Hideaway'. There's a Poetry night on tonight; I signed you up to perform."

"You did *WHAT??*"

"Suzanne, your poetry's brilliant, you can do the one you recited to me over the phone the other evening..."

"No I can't, I get all nervous in front of crowds!"

She turns to leave, but Charles stops her.

"Come on Sue, you'll be fine. I'll be right there in the front; you can focus on me if you like."

"Why would you *do* this??"

"Because you told me you wanted to start performing your poetry? That you wanted to step outside of your comfort zone?"

"I didn't mean on our first date!"

"You'll be fine; it's not a competition, and the crowd are only here to listen to poetry – they'll LOVE you!"

Suzanne pauses to think.

"Okay."

They enter the venue. Charles tells the woman on the door that Suzanne should be on the list to perform; she ticks her name off. They enter the packed room; the atmosphere is electrifying. They find somewhere to sit.

"Would you like a drink?" Charles asks.

"Red wine please – I need to calm my nerves!"

"Just take some deep breathes and tell yourself 'I am calm'. I'll go get your wine."

While Charles is at the bar, Suzanne closes her eyes, breathes deeply and repeats "I am calm" to herself. As she watches the other performers, she begins to

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feel more at ease; the crowd is supportive, clapping and cheering after each act. Charles returns with the drinks.

"How do you feel now?" he asks.

"Better, thanks."

"So you ready to perform?"

"Ready as I'll ever be."

Suzanne gulps all her wine down in one go.

"Hey, take it easy!" he warns, looking amused.

"That s**t needs to get in my system, quick!"

Charles chuckles.

"I wouldn't have brought you here if I didn't think you'd nail it."

Suzanne's name is called; she makes her way to the stage. The microphone is on a stand; she makes no attempt to hold it – that way, no-one will be able to see her hands shaking. She begins reciting the poem she had written based on four different types of Single Black Women, starting with the 'Career Woman':

*I am a Strong, Black Woman
Beautiful, Independent, Confident, Affluent
But distinctly, alone.
I've got the nice house,
I've got the flash car,
I've got all the money in the bank I need,
I can buy the clothes I like,
I travel whenever I can,
The only thing I DON'T have is....*

She raises her hands to get a response from the crowd, who say it with her;

A MAN!

She continues;

*I'm tired of going out with the girls,
And driving myself back home
Opening the door to an empty house,
Crawling into my empty KING-sized bed
Instead of having someone to come home to,*

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*Or better still, come home with!
But instead, I live in solitary confinement
A prisoner of my own success...*

*I need a MAN!
Not just any old man
But a Strong Black Man,
Someone I can relate to
Culturally, intellectually, spiritually,
And of course, physically...*

She raises her eyebrows suggestively; the crowd hoot, clap and applause, which raises her confidence levels.

*I need a man who won't be intimidated by me;
I don't need a man who needs me more than I need him
But I do need a man who's patient, loyal and loving...*

Halfway through, Suzanne gains enough confidence to take the mic off the stand and begins pacing to and fro across the stage, engaging more with the audience, who are clearly enjoying her performance;

*I need a man who knows how to take control in a situation
without dominating (If you know what I mean),
And I want a man who can handle me
'Cos I ain't easy;
Yes I know I'm hard work, I admit it
But the one who cracks the nut
shall eat of the fruit in it...*

At the end of her performance Suzanne replaces the mic on its stand, and takes a bow to a resounding applause. She makes her way back to the table where Charles is clapping profusely.

"You were great, Sue! See, I told you they'd love you!"

"Well, thanks for giving me the push I needed, I really enjoyed that!"

"My pleasure! When did you write that poem?"

"About a year ago, why?"

"I thought you were talking about me!"

"Maybe I was!"



Part Three: Love vs. Fear

Charles pulls up outside Suzanne's house.

"Do you want to come in for a cup of tea?" she asks.

He smiles broadly.

"I'd love to!"

"Don't get any ideas!" she warns him.

"I already told you, I'm not that kinda guy."

"Yes you did, sorry. Come in..."

They make their way inside and enter the living room.

"I'll put the kettle on, what tea would you like?"

"Do you have any peppermint?"

"Yes, that's my favourite."

"Mine too!"

Suzanne heads for the kitchen. Charles walks over to get a closer look at the framed pictures of Suzanne and her boys hung on the wall. She returns to the living room carrying a tray with a pot of peppermint tea, two cups, and a plate of biscuits.

"Your boys are cute," he compliments.

"Thanks, they're my little angels."

"So they don't give you any trouble?"

"Well boys will be boys, but so far, thank God (she knocks her wooden table), I have no complaints."

"Tell me, how do you get on with their dad now?"

"Oh, I only talk to him if I have to. He has the boys every other weekend, and we split the care during school holidays. We've both moved on, if that's what you mean."

Charles nods with a smug look on his face, pleased with her reply.

As they sit on the sofa drinking their tea, Suzanne again brings up the topic of why he doesn't go to church.

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"So Charles, I understand what you said about Christianity being used to enslave our ancestors, but – what about when you die? Aren't you afraid of going to hell?"

Charles chuckles.

"See that's the problem with religion, it's fear-based. Would you still be a Christian if you weren't afraid of going to hell?"

Suzanne ponders the question before replying confidently;

"Yes, I would. I'm a Christian because God *loves* me, and I love Him."

Charles smiles, looking her straight in the eyes;

"Well I love God too...I see God in everybody; I see God in *you*."

Even though they're talking about church and God, they're both aware of the underlying current; they're inches away from each other on the sofa, and the heat they both seem to be generating is beginning to set sparks flying.

Suzanne continues probing:

"Okay, so how do you know you're life is right with God?"

"Well, I do my best to live by the Laws set out when God created the Heavens and the Earth: *Universal* Laws. I reckon if everyone was to live by *these* Laws, the world would be a better place."

"What are 'Universal Laws'?" she asks inquisitively. She'd never heard of them before.

"Universal Laws apply to everyone – not just Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists or one group of people. When the universe was created, certain Laws were put in place to keep everything in order. The universe isn't 'out there' somewhere; we're *in* the universe, and therefore subject to its Laws. They're also called 'Laws of Nature', or Spiritual Laws. If people lived by *these* Laws instead of man-made laws, we'd all be able to create 'Heaven on Earth' – if you look around at nature, abundance is everywhere. The only time you see lack, is where man has interfered with what nature does naturally."

"Hmmm...that's really interesting; can you name some of these Laws?"

"'You Reap What You Sow' is one of them; scientifically they call it 'Cause and Effect'. This means for every *action* you take, there must be a *re-action*. Everything you do produces an outcome, or a harvest. So if you do good deeds (or sow good seeds) you'll reap a good harvest. If you sow bad seeds, you'll reap the results of your actions."

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Suzanne can now see why Charles always seems to be calculating his movements.

"No wonder Jesus said to 'love your neighbour as yourself' – if everyone treats others the way *they'd* like to be treated, the world *would* be a better place!"

"Well, without getting into the whole Jesus thing again, yes. It's a simple Law that could change the whole world if applied. The problem is, most people *don't* love themselves. There's a lot of self-hate, especially in our community – and we've been taught to 'fear God', which in itself is an oxymoron. How can you fear God if God is Love? Fear is the complete *opposite* of Love!"

"I thought *hate* was the opposite of Love?" Suzanne looks puzzled.

"People hate out of fear. For instance, the root cause of racism is fear. They hate us because they fear us. According to the Universal Law of Polarity, *fear* is the opposite of Love."

"Where can I learn more about these Laws?" Suzanne asks.

"Just go online and do a search for 'Universal Laws' or something – but don't take everything you read as gospel, make sure you have at least two or three of the same answer before you take it as fact."

Again, this reminds Suzanne of a scripture which says '*in the mouth of two or three witnesses a matter shall be established*'. It feels as if God is speaking to her through Charles; his words nourish her soul.

"I can lend you some books as well; you're welcome to come over to my place sometime and pick a few if you like."

"I might just take you up on that!" she replies, smiling gratefully.

They spend the next hour talking and listening to music. Although Suzanne is a practicing Christian, her weakness is strong Black men; even though they're not touching, the chemistry between them is electrifying. It's been over three years since Suzanne last had sex, and while the attraction is strong, she knows she doesn't want to sleep with him on their first date.

By 1.30am it becomes apparent than he doesn't want to go, and she doesn't want him to leave either. She makes a suggestion;

"Charles, we've waited two weeks to meet, and it might be another two before we get to see each other again. Why don't we make the most of it? We both have will-

power, we can just lie on the bed and talk 'til we fall asleep, then you can drive home in the morning, how does that sound?"

"Sounds good to me!"

They move to her bedroom, and lying on top of her bed cuddling, they talk and talk into the early hours of the morning, finally falling asleep in each other's arms, fully clothed.



The Following Morning...

It's Sunday. No work for Charles, and the boys will be at their dad's until the evening, so Charles and Suzanne have the day to themselves. Suzanne is in the habit of getting up early to do her morning devotion, exercise and get washed and dressed before the boys wake up at 7.30am. Sometimes she's just inspired to write. Charles is an early riser too. He normally goes to the gym in the morning, so even though it's Sunday and they'd had a late night, they're both awake by 7am. Suzanne wakes up first, heads for the bathroom and does some stretches before taking a shower. In the meantime, Charles wakes up, sits up, and waits for her to return. As she emerges from the bathroom tying her robe, he eyes her up from top to bottom. The magnetic pull towards each other is irresistible.

"Good morning! Did you sleep okay?" she asks as she makes her way towards him.

"Like a baby," He smiles at her boyishly.

"Me too; do you need to freshen up?"

"If you don't mind; I'm not in any particular rush to get home."

"That's what I was hoping! What would you like for breakfast?"

"It's too early for breakfast – just relax, it's Sunday!"

"Okay, well there are clean towels on the shelf in the bathroom, and you can find a spare toothbrush in the cupboard."

"Great, thanks."

While Charles takes his shower, Suzanne straightens her bedsheets. He returns with just a small white towel wrapped around his waist.

"Do you have any cream?"

"Here's some coconut oil..."

She hands it to him.

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The sight of him oiling his dark, moist skin inspires a few lines for a poem. Suzanne grabs her notepad and pen off the bedside table and writes:

*Your physique is unique,
Natural muscle definition under your skin
With rich tones of melanin!
Your body is like carved mahogany,
Dark and shiny...*

Charles notices her gawking.

"See something you like?" he asks cheekily.

Suzanne averts her eyes.

"I'm not looking."

"Okay... well do you have a robe for me as well?"

"No I don't; get in the bed, I'll get some DVD's for us to watch."

Suzanne leaves the room and Charles gets in bed, hoping she'll join him. She returns with a few DVD's, removes her robe and gets in the bed as well, wearing a matching vest and shorts set.

"What do you want to watch?"

She shows him the selection; he doesn't seem interested in any of them.

"I'd much rather watch *you*. Why don't you perform a poem for me – naked?"

"You must be joking! It might *feel* like we've known each other forever, but I'm *not* prancing around in front of you naked!"

"Why not? I thought we wanted to get to know each other better? We've explored each other's minds, shouldn't we explore each other's bodies as well? It doesn't have to lead to sex, you know! Like you said, we both have will-power."

"I'm not that strong; I have a weakness for dark-skin."

Charles lies back, interlocking his fingers behind his head.

"Go on, trust yourself – touch me."

Suzanne is like an addict, offered the thing she's been trying to give up. At first, she touches him tentatively, stroking his chest, shoulders, arms and face. Seeing the lump in his genital area, she throws the covers off him completely, and is met face-to-face with his manhood.

"What do you want to do now?" he murmurs seductively.

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Without a word, Suzanne moves to lie on top of Charles and gives him his first full-blown kiss. He pulls her into him as they French-kiss passionately. She can feel his hard-on pressed against her pubic bone, and kisses her way down to greet it. Her religious beliefs temporarily go out the window.

"Does it have a name?" she asks, knowing some men like to do this.

"Yeah, Pride."

"Pride?"

She thinks it's a bit of an odd name for a dick, until he explains;

"You read the bible don't you? Doesn't it say 'Pride *comes* before a fall'?"

It takes a moment for Suzanne to get it, but when she does, she bursts out laughing.

"No it *doesn't* actually!"

Still, she thinks it's funny.

"Well, it also *stands* for 'Black Pride'" he adds, raising his hand in a fist. Suzanne turns her attention back to the job in (her) hand. It's a piece of art; her fingers can hardly meet around its girth, and as it stands erect, all nine-and-a-half inches lean to one side. A large vein runs down its underside, and with the skin pulled back, its head stands out loud and proud. This is her smooth dark chocolate-coloured dream!

"Hello, Pride!"

Suzanne looks up at Charles as she introduces herself to Pride with her tongue. He lets out a deep-throated groan. She begins lubricating his shaft slowly and deliberately.

"Oh, DAMN!"

His face melts into pure bliss; he grabs her by the head to push her further unto Pride. Suzanne jerks her head away abruptly, giving him a look that lets him know the only place out of bounds to him is her hair. He raises his hands in surrender.

"Okay, okay, I get it!"

He pulls her up to lie next to him; they're both aroused. Quincy Jones' '*Secret Garden*' plays on the stereo in the background. They press against each other hungrily, exploring each other's bodies; kissing, touching, discovering, learning, bonding.

Straddling her on all fours like an animal that has just caught its prey, Charles brands his mark all over her body, leaving a burning trail of hot kisses all over her

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face, neck, shoulders, arms, and chest. Pausing at her breasts, he cups each one in his hands, pushing them together. As he licks, sucks and teases each erect nipple, Suzanne moans and writhes underneath him...he continues his journey of exploration around the map of her body, kissing every new place he encounters; he burns kisses into her stomach, thighs, calves, legs, and feet. He then traces a wet line with his tongue gently back up from her ankle to her inner thigh, stopping at her 'flower'.

Her flesh tingles in anticipation of what she knows is coming. Parting her labia, he reveals the juicy pink flesh underneath.

As the tip of his tongue makes contact with her 'happy bud', an electrical current runs through Suzanne's whole body, causing her to jerk sporadically; she lets out a soft gasp. Tasting her sweet nectar, he moves his tongue slowly backwards and forwards, then in circular motions; Suzanne's back arches involuntarily with each cycle, as he increases the speed. Soon, his tongue is darting up and down, back and forth, making her clitoris go as hard as his own erection. He eats her like it's his favourite meal. Suzanne moans with pleasure; holding his head between her hands, she guides him to make sure he's hitting the right spots. She raises her head from the pillow to see if he's enjoying this as much as she is; his focus is totally on the job in hand (or should I say 'tongue'?)

"Oh Charles, that feels sooooo goooooood!" she whispers to him.

He raises his head briefly to look up at her and reply "I aim to please", before burying his head between her thighs again. As he continues working his magic, she can feel the waves of orgasm approaching;

"Oh my god, I'm coming!"

Suzanne gasps as her eyes roll to the back of her head. The thought of her coming in his mouth excites him; he pulls the whole of her mound deep into his mouth and concentrates his effort on her clitoris, licking with increased intensity.

"Charles, I'm comiiiiiiiiiiiiing!"

Her body jerks uncontrollably as the waves of orgasm hit, sending an electrical current travelling from her clitoris, up her torso, down her arms and legs to every other nerve in her body, ending in the tips of her fingers, toes, and the top of her head.

He drinks every last drop of her sweet juices.

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After she climaxes, Charles gets ready to ride, first seeking permission with his eyes.

"I don't have any condoms, do you?"

"Hold on..."

He reaches over to his jacket pocket and takes a condom out of his wallet. Suzanne looks at him suspiciously.

"Don't look at me like that, my mother told me to 'always be prepared'."

He gets into the missionary position, looking Suzanne deep in her eyes as he inserts Pride slowly, inch by inch. She sighs deeply as he delves deeper and deeper into her hot tunnel. He's a perfect fit, as if they were made for each other, like Adam and Eve.

"I love the way you said my name when you came," he murmurs in her ear.

"I love the way you made me come!"

As they kiss passionately, Charles builds up a rhythm, increasing the intensity and speed of his thrusts. Suzanne holds on for the ride.

"That feels so good!" she gasps.

Without warning, he drives Pride deep inside her; she cries out in pleasure and pain. He watches her breasts rise and fall beneath him as she breathes heavily, holding on to his shoulders for support. He does it again; one hard, then one soft. Each time he drives in hard, she cries out, turning him on even more.

"Give it to me baby!"

"I'm giving it to you!"

He grabs hold of her ankles and places them on his shoulders. As she crosses her feet behind his head, her back naturally rises off the bed. At this angle, he's able to penetrate even deeper. He kisses her feet and ankles as he drives Pride in and out of her wet vagina, which makes a soft slurping noise with each thrust as if saying 'thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you'.

"Tell me what it feels like, inside of me," Suzanne moans.

"Oh man, it feels like...it feels like..."

He can hardly get the words out, he's so *into* her;

"...It feels like I'm entering the center of your yoni-verse; the deeper I go, the hotter it gets!" he finally manages to explain, quite eloquently.

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Suzanne moans in delight; this is sheer, unadulterated bliss! *'How can something so wrong feel so right?'* Her religious beliefs try to creep in again...she'll save the guilty conscience for later. She squeezes her vaginal muscles around his great obelisk.

"Oh, sh..IT! Do that again!" he groans in his deep, sexy voice. She squeezes again, harder this time, muscle-massaging him as he thrusts back and forth.

"Oh, F**K!"

She's never heard him swear before! He directs her into the doggy position, and enters her front passage from behind. Suzanne buries her face in a pillow to muffle her cries of passion; she can feel Pride's banana-like bend massaging her g-spot, which sends small electrical currents rippling through her whole body, bringing her closer and closer to orgasm with each thrust. Charles reaches round to play with a breast before reaching down to stimulate her clitoris while still pounding her from behind. With all her erogenous zones being catered for, Suzanne can feel herself coming again. He grabs hold of her hips, and riding her like a black stallion, heads for the finish line...

When the ultimate moment 'comes', they both climax together loudly, before falling into a slippery heap of skin and sweat.

As they lie spooned in bed together, Charles wraps his arm around Suzanne's waist from behind, making her feel like a captured prey.

She has no desire to be freed.

She can still feel him throbbing inside her as he falls asleep, and if it wasn't for the condom he's wearing, their body fluids would have mingled together, sealing their union.

She soon drifts off into a peaceful sleep too.....

.....I'm like a Butterfly, fluttering from flower to flower – but then I realize I have the power to go higher, so upwards I fly until I see the treetops way below me. Still higher I fly until I become like one of the stars illuminating the night sky. It feels so free, to be able to rise so limitlessly; the night air brushes against my face as I'm drawn to the light above me – suddenly I'm aware that I'm not alone and looking down, I see a man with Wings of an Eagle flying just below me; his arms are outstretched as if waiting to catch me. The look on his face is like that of an angel

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and I know, I just know I would be safe in his arms – but it's not my intention to fall from this grace, so I beckon him to fly up and join me.

Even though the space between us is only that of a ladder, he struggles to reach me, as if some invisible force is holding him back. I wait patiently, flapping my red wings to help him stay focused, eager to experience the warmth of his embrace...finally he reaches me, and as I cross my arms across my chest he catches me, kissing my neck gently; the warmth of his breath.....

.....Suzanne is awakened by Charles planting warm, gentle kisses on her face and neck, as she lies cradled in his arm.

"What time is it?" she asks dreamily.

"Almost 12 o'clock", he murmurs into her ear.

Suzanne suddenly awakens to the full realization of what has just happened...she had lost it all; track of time, her dignity – and her favourite wig! She jumps up frantically looking for it...finding it down the side of the bed, she grabs her bathrobe, puts it on, tucks the wig inside, and rushes to the bathroom. Five minutes later she returns to the bedroom composed, wig intact. Charles watches the whole scenario in amusement.

"Hun, you have a beautiful head of natural hair, why do you hide it under that wig?"

"It's just easier for me to manage, that's all – my hair is so *thick!*"

"Well, I think your own hair suits you much better."

"I know you're just saying that to make me feel better – men prefer long, straight hair."

"Not me...unless of course it's *naturally* long and straight."

"That's what I mean! You're all going off with white women, Asian women, Latino women – anything but your own women!"

"Not all, Sue. Some of us still prefer a sister with her natural hair, you know."

"Well you should let us know then!"

Changing the subject she adds;

"You must be starving by now, what would you like for breakfast?"

"What do you have?"

"I can make us an omelette?"

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"As long as you don't use cow's milk – I'm lactose intolerant."

"So am I! I use almond milk, is that okay?"

"Perfect."

"I need to start dinner for when the boys get back as well."

"What time are they back?"

"Six o'clock."

"Oh I'll be long gone by then – but first..."

He grabs Suzanne around the waist as she tries to leave the bedroom, pulling her back unto the bed, and removing her wig...



Before leaving, Charles gives Suzanne a long...slow...kiss, making her go all weak at the knees.

"I'll call you later," he whispers in her ear.

As she closes the door behind him, she leans her back against it and slowly slides down to the floor, replaying the whole magical night and day in her mind, with a big smile on her face.

'He's definitely 'The One!' she thinks.

As fun as the sex was, there was something deeply spiritual about it. However, it doesn't take long for the guilty feelings to creep back in.

"Oh no, I've sinned again!" she cries out in despair.

With head in her hands, Suzanne realizes she's going to have to repent *again*. Yet the experience had felt so natural, so beautiful, so right – how could it have been wrong?

As she prays for forgiveness, Suzanne questions her Maker; "Why do You have such great expectations of me, when You've made me so *weak*?"



Lucid Dream # 2

Suzanne never sets an alarm, preferring to let her body wake up naturally. As she had been on the phone with Charles until the early hours of the morning, she wakes up late, emerging from another vivid dream. She calls Charles right away to

tell him about it: he was walking down the aisle towards her – they were getting married!

She recalls the way his broad shoulders shifted from side to side as he walked, and the big smile on his face as he sauntered towards her. She describes what he was wearing; a purple suit with a red rose in its lapel, and brown shoes.

Charles chuckles.

"Me in a purple suit and brown shoes?"

He always wore dark colours; grey, black or blue.

'Well at least he isn't laughing at the idea of us getting married!' Suzanne thinks to herself.

"I was thinking, since you don't have the boys next weekend, you can spend it at my place if you like," he suggests.

"Alright, I will!"

After their call she happily writes the dream and Charles's response into her journal, before praying that if he is indeed 'The One', to let him get saved.

Charles is a one-in-a-million kinda guy; tall, dark and handsome, intelligent, well-spoken, loving, spiritual, respectful, financially savvy, and...Black! What more could she ask for?

"HE MUST BE BORN AGAIN!"

She can already hear the voice of her Pastor booming from the pulpit. If he hasn't accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of his life, she would be 'unequally yoked to an unbeliever'. But Charles is perfect, she argues within herself; she's sure they had met by some kind of Divine Order – he's everything she'd hoped and prayed for, God's best promise; Faith, Hope and Love all rolled into one. There's only one problem...he's not a Christian. Does it matter? Her indoctrination won't allow her to say 'no'.

'If we're going to have a proper relationship, he has to get *saved*, and we're going to have to get *married*', she thinks to herself.



Conversation with God

They pull into the driveway of Charles' three bed end-of-terrace house. This is Suzanne's first time spending the weekend at his place. He carries her weekend bag inside for her.

It's a typical bachelor's pad; she admires his spacious living room with large brown leather sofas, a plasma screen TV hung on the wall, and a Playstation 2 plugged into it.

It's neat; there are only a few books piled on the coffee table. His taste in decor is similar to hers; wooden floors, plain walls, and minimal furniture. She notices his library which takes up one whole wall. The saying...

'If you want to hide something from a Black man, put it in a book!'

...certainly doesn't apply to him! She remembers his offer to lend her some books on Universal Laws, so walks over and scans the rows of Self-development, African History, and novels on the shelves. However, one particular book 'Conversations with God Book One' catches her eye. She picks it out and opens it at a random page:

'...Words are merely utterances; noises that stand for feelings, thoughts, and experiences. They are symbols. Signs. Insignias. They are not TRUTH. They are not the real thing.

Words may help you to understand something. Experience allows you to KNOW. Yet there are some things you cannot experience. So I have given you other tools of knowing. And these are called FEELINGS...Now the supreme irony here is that you have all placed so much importance on the Word of God, and so little on experience. In fact, you place so little value on experience that when what you experience of God differs from what you've heard of God, you automatically discard the experience and own the words, when it should be the other way around...Many words have been uttered by others, in My name. Many thoughts and many feelings have been sponsored by causes not of My direct creation. Many experiences result from these. The challenge is one of discernment. The difficulty is knowing the difference between messages from God and data from other sources. Discrimination is a

simple matter with the application of a basic rule: Mine is always your Highest Thought, your Clearest Word, your Grandest Feeling. Anything less is from another source.'

Tears well up in Suzanne's eyes; it's as if God is talking to her Himself, she recognizes His words of Love immediately.

"Can I borrow this book?" she turns to ask Charles.

He walks over to see which one she has chosen.

"Sure...why that one in particular?"

"It reminds me of a letter I wrote to God – it's as if He's replying in this book!"

"What was the letter about?"

"Oh, I was just venting, asking all the questions the church couldn't answer. I ended it by asking for 'the Truth'."

"Did you find the Truth?"

"I'm still on the quest."

"Well maybe we can go on the journey together."



The Bible and Sex

Suzanne attends church with her boys. After a powerful Praise & Worship with the choir, the congregation settle down to hear the sermon. Pastor Mensah begins in his strong, West-African accent;

"I have a message this morning for certain members of the church..." (pronounced 'choch'), he announces.

He scans the congregation as if looking for who the sermon might be for.

"...As I relay this message that the Lord has given me, I'm sure those for whom it is intended will recognize themselves. Are you listening to me somebody?"

"Yes!" the congregation respond enthusiastically.

"Is it okay if I pass on the message that the Lord has given me today?"

"It's okay!" they say.

"Do you promise not to shoot the messenger?"

"We promise!"

"Oh, you say you will not shoot the messenger, but Jesus had a message of Love from the Father (pronounced 'Fadda') – and they crucified him!"

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Dramatic music plays from the band. There's uproar from the congregation. Pastor Mensah does a Holy Ghost dance.

"Do you promise not to crucify your Pastor this morning?"

"We promise!"

He pauses to wipe his brow before continuing:

"The message the Lord wants me to share with you today is – HE SEES YOU! Somebody turn to your neighbour and say 'Your Father sees you!'"

The congregation do as Pastor Mensah says.

"Now turn to your other neighbour and say 'My Father, He sees you!'"

There's murmuring and laughter as the congregation obey.

"Now tap the person in front of you and say 'My Father, He sees you!'"

The congregation laugh as they do his bidding.

"Now point to the late-comers right at the back and say 'My Father, He sees you!'"

There's more laughter as they carry out his instructions. Pastor Mensah waits for everyone to settle down again. He wipes his brow with a handkerchief.

"Now open your bibles to Hebrews 4:13. Sister Sonia, will you read what the Lord has to say?"

A young, attractive woman in her early twenties stands up and reads in a steady, confident voice;

"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before His eyes, and He is the one to whom we are accountable."

"To whom we are *what*?" Pastor Mensah calls out.

"Accountable!" the congregation respond.

"Now turn your bibles to Psalm 33:13. Sister Letishia, will you read what King David had to say; beloved children of God, are you listening? The Lord is waiting for you to heed His word so you might be saved – Sister Letishia, read!"

Another young, attractive woman stands:

"The Lord looks down from heaven and sees all the sons of men."

Pastor Mensah echoes;

"The Lord looks down from heaven and sees ALL the sons *and daughters* of men! And Sister Suzanna, will you be so kind as to read Proverbs 15 verse 3?"

Suzanne quickly finds the scripture and stands to read;

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"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

"Ah-HA! Please read that again Sister Suzanna, because some of you were not paying attention!"

Suzanne reads it again, this time slower, steadier and louder.

Pastor Mensah expounds the scriptures;

"So you see my dear people, this essential quality of our God as an all-seeing God is found throughout Holy Scripture! Do you know what this means, brodas and sistas? It means the Lord is telling you that He not only has *good* vision, He doesn't need reading glasses like your Pastor (peering over the rim of his glasses), He has *more* than 20-20 vision – the Lord is telling you that He has X-RAY VISION! *Are you listening to me somebody?*"

Suzanne looks round at the crowd, wondering where Pastor is going with his sermon. He elaborates:

"This means that there are NO SECRETS from the Lord, you cannot hide from Him, but the Lord has revealed to me that some of His children are attempting to keep secrets from Him!"

Suzanne begins to feel nervous; has God revealed her secret sex with Charles to Pastor? She holds her breath.

"Yes! Some of you are not married, yet you are sitting in His holy house in unholy undergarments – VIC-TORIA'S SECRETS!"

The congregation gasps and murmurs at his revelation, while Suzanne breathes a sigh of relief.

"Yes! You are not satisfied with Marks & Spencer's anymore, you are not happy with Primark anymore, *now* you are going to Ann Summers, *now* you are going to Victoria's Secret, but I'm telling you, there are NO SECRETS FROM THE LORD!"

Suzanne begins to feel agitated.

"I can't even *afford* Victoria's Secret!' she thinks.

Pastor Mensah continues:

"Now I ask you ladies, do you think it's *appropriate* to wear this kind of clothing to choch? Hmm? I will now read from 1 Timothy 2 verse 9: 'Likewise also that women should adorn themselves in modest apparel with shamefacedness and self-control'. In other words sistas, you are leading your brodas into temptation, because it is written in Matthew 5 verse 28 'that whoever looks on a woman with lustful intent has

ALREADY committed adultery with her in his heart'. Is this your intention sistas? Do you want to send your brodas to HELL?"

He continues admonishing the women about wearing underwear that accentuates their sexuality.

'Here we go again – I came here to be edified, not bombarded with misquoted scriptures!' Suzanne thinks to herself.

Her mind wanders to the chicken she had left on a slow cook in the oven. The peas are already cooked and when she gets home, she'll add the rice to them and boil it down, and make the macaroni cheese. She doesn't want to spend too long in the kitchen today, as Charles will be meeting her boys for the first time.

When Pastor Mensah quotes Lauren Hill's 'that was the sin that did Jezebel in' Suzanne begins to imagine herself wearing expensive sexy lingerie for Charles.



Right Time to Meet

Charles is double-parked outside the church, waiting to pick up Suzanne and her boys. As they get in his car, she introduces them;

"Boys, meet Charles; Charles, this is Micah, and this is Elijah."

She points them out respectively.

"Hi Micah, hi Elijah, jump in!" Charles greets them.

The boys say 'hi' reservedly as they get in the car. Suzanne gives Charles a light peck on the cheek.

"How was the service?" he asks.

"The Praise & Worship was beautiful, but the sermon was fire and brimstone – I felt so condemned!"

"Why, what was it about?"

(She lip-syncs 'sex') "before marriage."

Charles huffs before replying;

"That's why I don't follow religions, they're fear-based."

"We'll have *this* conversation later!"

She turns to the boys.

"How was the children's service?"

Micah: "Good."

Elijah: "Good."

"What did you learn?" she probes.

"That Jesus died so I could be washed white as snow," replies Micah.

"I learned that I'm a poor, wretched sinner, but through Jesus' blood, I can be saved," says Elijah.

Charles gives Suzanne a 'told you so' look.

"You better find some other spiritual system to teach them before you damage their young minds!"



Mother/Father?

Back at Suzanne's, the boys and Charles have bonded over the Playstation. While they're playing games, she finishes preparing dinner in the kitchen.

"Boys, can you lay the table please?" she calls out in Mum Mode.

"Hold on mum, we just need to finish this game!" Elijah calls back.

"Well hurry up, I'm bringing out the food in five minutes – don't let me have to tell you again!"

"Is there anything I can help with?" Charles offers.

"Yes, help them lay the table please."

They finish the game and put the plates, knives and forks on the table mats. Charles folds the napkins. Suzanne begins bringing out the rice and peas, stewed chicken, macaroni cheese, sautéed potatoes, salad, and home-made coleslaw. They all sit down to eat.

"Mmmm... looks delicious! Shall I say grace?" Charles volunteers.

"Yes please!"

They all bow their heads and close their eyes.

"Mother-Father Creator, thank you for provision today; bless the hands that grew the food, bless the hands that made the food, and may it sustain all our bodily functions, amen."

Suzanne and the boys say 'Amen'.

"*Mother-Father Creator?*" she questions, picking up her knife and fork.

"Yeah... some years ago I asked God 'How can there be a Father and a Son, but no mention of a Mother?' I was directed to Proverbs 8, where Wisdom is personified

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as a woman. It says that Wisdom was with God in the beginning, and that without Wisdom, nothing was created."

"I'm gonna have to read that again!"

The boys aren't sure when their mum started seeing Charles, but it's obvious that by the time she introduces him to them, they'd known each other for quite a while already. They show him respect, because they can see that he loves their mum and treats *her* with respect. As long as *she's* happy, they're happy.



Suzanne and Charles are cuddled on the sofa; the boys are in bed.

"So tell me more about the sermon," he requests.

"Oh my god Charles, talk about condemnation! I felt so guilty about having sex before marriage!"

"Well, what *is* marriage?"

"What do you mean, 'what is marriage'?"

"Is it the 'white wedding'? Exchanging rings? Signing a register? The wedding reception and honeymoon? All those things are creations of *man*, not 'of God'."

Suzanne pauses to think before replying.

"Hmmm...I see what you mean, but the bible clearly states that sex before marriage is wrong."

"There are plenty of instances in the bible where people had pre-marital sex. Even King Solomon known as the wisest man to ever live, had sex outside of his marriage – not to mention all his concubines," he states.

"True, but those were all in the *Old Testament*."

"So did Jesus come to set you free, or to put you in further bondage?"

"I see what you're trying to do Charles! You just don't want to commit, do you?"

"I *am* committed to you Sue, you don't need a piece of paper to tell you that, do you?"

Suzanne begins to feel agitated.

"Well I can't continue having sex with you indefinitely outside of my beliefs. Fornication is a sin."

"Then maybe you should change your beliefs."

"How do I do that? I've been told this all my life!"

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"Okay, well here's what I did to change mine; first I asked my Self 'What is God's idea of marriage; is it a physical or a *spiritual* union?' Then I un-indoctrinated myself by saying "I love sex!" whenever I was in the act. Instead of thinking I was doing something wrong, I started to think about how *right* it felt, and how sex is the best gift God gave us. Actually I learned this from that book you borrowed."

"Well it sounds good in *theory* Charles, but we both know the bible says it's a sin to have sex before marriage."

"Did you know that every time the bible says a man 'knew' his wife, it means they had sex? There was no going to church to get married, or a registry office for that matter."

"So what are you saying, that we're already married?"

"In a way, yeah."

Suzanne crosses her arms, turns away and sulks. Charles moves closer and puts his arm around her.

"Hun, I'm not saying I'd never sign papers, but it's not the be-all-and-end-all. I know lots of people who are going through *hell* in their marriages right now, some are even Christian. I don't want to end up like that."

"Nor do I, but I do want to live a life that's pleasing in God's sight."

"Don't you think you are? Look how He brought us together! When the time's right, we *will* marry, but not because we're pressured into it by any outside forces, it will be *our* choice."

He pulls her into a warm embrace.



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Lezanne