

Journey of a Sister



A Black Love Story

Featuring artwork and poetry by the Author

CEZANNE POETESS

'Black Butterfly' by Cezanne

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)**

Dedication

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

Hosea 4:

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 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 herstory, 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 2007-2009 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 journey of Self-discovery!

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 audiobook 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 full e-book is a £5 discount code towards your **personally signed paperback**.

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

In your service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lezanne', written in a cursive style.

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

Touching the Heart...through Art!



'Sesa Wo Suban'

The West African (Ghanaian) Adinkra Symbol for 'Transformation'

Year One: "The Truth!"

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 for 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 please 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, she 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 His 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 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 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

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unprotected, He *cursed* 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 an angel at the entrance of the garden 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. She writes; '*...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 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,*

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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 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, and 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:

*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,

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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' replies promptly, and in a language she can relate to – poetry! As she's writing, she can feel His presence surrounding her 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 to ask 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 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.

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"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 to tell 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 up on her mobile phone which she doesn't recognize, and she 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;

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"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?"

"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."

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"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'?"

"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."

Year One: "The Truth!"

"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!"

"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?"

"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'm driving so it's not a problem – 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 patiently 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, and places 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.

Year One: "The Truth!"

"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."

"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; he 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 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. I spent the first 10 years of my life being raised in his village in Ghana. When he died, my mother returned to England where they first met. She carried on taking us to church, 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.

Year One: "The Truth!"

"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."

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

Suzanne half-laughs.

"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 night..."

"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!"

Year One: "The Truth!"

"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 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*

Year One: "The Truth!"

*Opening the door to an empty house,
Crawling into my empty KING-sized bed
Instead of having someone to come home to,
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. She 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?"

Year One: "The Truth!"

"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.

"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 her 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 He 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 everyone was to live 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 interferes with what nature does naturally."

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

Year One: "The Truth!"

"'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."

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.

Year One: "The Truth!"

By 1.30am it becomes apparent that 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 until 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.

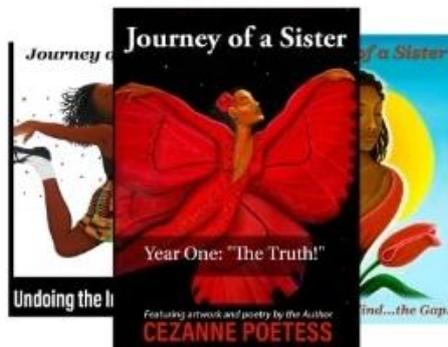


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