



**Penelope Sanyu**

**Stranger  
in my Bed**

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ISBN: 978-9970-9744-0-5

P.O.Box 9507, Kampala,  
+256 782 813 210  
Penelope.sanyu@gmail.com

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Cover design and layout by Nomad Advertising Ltd.

Cover Image: [www.gettyimages.com](http://www.gettyimages.com)

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Printed in Uganda

## *Rhona says...*

“ We have all been here! Penelope shares a story that most women and men can relate with. A tale of how we have often laid our hearts out on the table, only to be betrayed by the ones we have trusted. This story teaches how you can transform anguish into strength that will enable you shape the future you desire.”

*Ms. Rhona Arinaitwe  
Corporate Relations Manager, Uganda Breweries.*

## *Priscilla says...*

“An extraordinary, relate-able and honest story that we have all heard, discussed over a glass of wine or experienced in our lives and families. Penelope, tells a story of decisions and the struggle to succeed. This is a story of the effects of our decisions, A story about a woman we know, have met and have been.”

*Ms. Priscilla Tamale  
Human Rights Lawyer / Lecturer.*

## *Jeremy says...*

Naomi, Daniel, Melisa, Tony, Jeremy, maybe even you... You probably know someone that has a story similar to this one. Penny has an incredible ability to paint a scenario till you find yourself standing next to Naomi's bed as she delivers her baby. Read it. You'll love it!

*Jeremy Byemanzi*  
*Executive Creative Director, Nomad*

## *Noeline says...*

“Stranger in my Bed is a timely intervention for you and me as we go through the uncertain seasons of life. We often find ourselves in situations that we were never prepared for. Penelope opens the closets of women’s lives to let the light and life of God shine in on their dark moments. What a relief to know that there is light at the end of each a tunnel, that you can pick yourself up after your worst fall. Love makes life worth living more so when it’s the unconditional love of a God who requires nothing in return. The

stories shared are therapeutically structured and will soothe your soul even as you are reminded of the better life ahead of you.”

*Ms. Noeline Kirabo  
Personal & Business Development Coach*

## *Roxanna says...*

Told in typical candid-Penny fashion, *Stranger in my bed* tells the stories of countless people yet uses the power of fiction, turns their dark, hopeless, bleak ending into a bright future. In this book she tells us that wherever you are, whatever your past is, it is possible to live the life you desire. There is more, there is better. Thank you for screaming and crying and praying on behalf of everyone who feels voiceless.

*Roxanna A Kazibwe  
Love Campaigner, Creative Writer  
[www.youarebeingloved.com](http://www.youarebeingloved.com)*



## *ROMANS 5: 8*

*“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*



## *Dedication*

*This book is dedicated to every woman whose story must be told, whose story will change the world! You are Enough. May you find the courage to share your story someday.*



## *Dear Reader,*

Thank you for picking up this book. Reading through the pages of the book, some of you may find yourselves exclaiming in utter shock or judging and calling the characters herein names, but until you are pressed into these situations, you may never know what you would do if you were in their shoes.

Now just the title of this book can have your mind and thoughts darting all over the place, depending on who you are and where you come from. I hope you get inspired to support women and men out there. One of my favourite rock band artistes once said;

*Check your emotions*

*Keep your own stash of condoms*

*Choose your suitors wisely*

*Remain true to your dreams*

*Cut and Let go when things aren't right*

*Be ready for power and all that comes with it*

*Settle for nothing*

*Stand Proud, because you are a Girl*

Some of you may look at these chronicles and see someone you know or someone you met or maybe even see yourselves and realize you are not alone.

Whatever you glean out of these pages, do not forget to be inspired, encouraged and challenged.

God loves you the way you are!

Much Love,

*Penelope*

## *Prologue*

Reading this book made me think of the Facebook relationship status options where one of the descriptions is simply termed 'complicated'. Life is already complicated as it is, but throw in love and the complexity increases tenfold! Many of us can relate to the twists and turns and sometimes the burns we get when we love. We second guess ourselves, we may fall into the wrong relationships before we stumble into the right one. And sometimes along the way, we suddenly find, we don't know the stranger in our bed.

But thank God for redeeming love! No story is too ugly, too sinful, too far off or too far out for His love. And His love perfects all things, turns our messes into messages, our tests into testimonies, our trials into smiles.

You may have messed up in love, but take courage, your story isn't over yet. There is truly light at the end of what may now seem like a long dark tunnel. In the

meantime, as you wait to get there, tuck yourself in between your sheets and read this great tale about the stranger in your bed...

*Jacqueline Asimwe-Mwesige*  
*Human Rights Lawyer, Activist*

# One

**A**aaaauuuuuuuuugggggggggghhhhhhhhhh!" Naomi screamed nine months later as the paralyzing pains of childbirth shot through her body.

"Just take deep breaths, honey. It will be okay," the nurse calmly instructed. "Just breathe and push. Breathe and Push."

Although she meant well, Naomi had had it with this nurse and her instructions. Besides, nothing she suggested thus far had helped to ease the pain, so she decided to ignore her, refusing to breathe and refusing to push. As a matter of fact, she refused to do anything, even open her legs, until Daniel got there.

"What time is it? Where is my Phone? Give me the damn phone!" she demanded as she pushed the nurse away from her and attempted to climb out of the bed.

“Ms. Naomi, you’re going to have to calm down,” the doctor interjected. “Open your legs, and let’s deliver this baby.” She could sense the frustration in the doctor’s voice, but she sat there unmoved.

“Do you know who the hell I am? Do you know whose baby I am having?” She yelled hoping the doctor would sense the frustration in her voice. Her yelling silenced everyone.

Obviously, these people didn’t know who they were dealing with. No one told Daniel Ojara’s fiancée what to do. She lifted what seemed like her 200kgs body out of the bed and grabbed the phone. She couldn’t wait to drop the baby and the baby fat and get back to her old self. Her 55kg hourglass frame had turned into a 180kg blown glass vase. Her sleek jeans and baby tees had been replaced by sweat pants and oversize T-shirts. She dialled Daniel’s cell phone for the hundredth time. ‘Ring, ring...ring, ring...ring, ring...’ She couldn’t understand why he wasn’t picking up. She knew damn well he got all the messages she left him on her way to the hospital. He was probably with another woman. Her to be in-laws were at the hospital, Daniel’s sister was very supportive and since Daniel’s father was admitted

in the same hospital, it was easy to cross from one ward to another. Her four brothers were also present but all she wanted was Daniel.

Cheating had been a regular routine of his since the first time they officially got together with intentions of getting married. This game was getting ridiculous. Daniel knew she was in her ninth month and could be having his baby at any time. Just then a sharp pain jolted her. It felt as though it was electrocuting her body. It felt like her insides were ripping in two as she returned to the bed. She knew now that she couldn't keep this baby from coming so she decided to give in. She would just have to deal with Daniel's sorry ass later.

"Please Ms. Naomi, we really need you to cooperate. Your baby is in danger," the nurse begged.

"Fine. Just do whatever you need to do," Naomi said laying back on the bed and spreading her legs. "Get this thing out of me." Just then, another sharp pain ripped through her. "Damn you Daniel! Where the hell are you?" she said through her teeth. The contractions were hitting her like lightning bolts.

The thought of having their baby without him present caused tears to roll down her face. She knew Daniel was seeing other women, but when it came

to her, Naomi was always top priority. After all she was going to be the mother of his baby.

The nurse examined the consistency of Naomi's contractions once more before nodding to the doctor. She knew exactly what that meant: it was time. No more playing around; she had to push this baby out.

"Okay Ms. Naomi..." the doctor began to say as a loud craggy voice ricocheted off the walls of the hospital hallway.

"Naomi, where are you baby girl?" The doctor's sentence was interrupted by Daniel's call.

"In here baby," she yelled. "Room six!" A smile managed to slip in between the pains. He'd arrived just in time.

Although she was still pissed that she had been in labour for nearly nine hours before he had gotten to the hospital, she was happy that he was finally there.

When he came through the door, she looked at his perfect appearance and dropped a tear.

He walked over and kissed her on the cheek as he grabbed her hand, she could smell the fresh scent of his Calvin Klein cologne. My, did he look good or what?

“What’s up, Doc? We ready? Let’s have this baby, already!” Daniel said, rubbing his hands together.

Both the Nurse and the doctor stood speechless at Daniel’s charm. He came in there as if the doctor was not going to deliver the baby until he had instructed him to do so.

“Sir, we are going to need to get you into scrubs,” the nurse said.

“Scrub? Who are you calling a scrub?” Daniel snapped with a hard-core look on his face.

The nurse looked as though she was going to pee in her pants and the doctor was five seconds away from calling hospital security.

“I’m just messing with you,” Daniel joked. “go ahead, dress me up in those hospital threads.”

“Baby, you so silly,” Naomi tried to laugh at his humour before another labour pain hit her.

The nurse quickly got Daniel into his scrubs while another nurse joined the party to assist. Daniel held her hand and tried to practice breathing with her while the doctor encouraged her to push. Fifteen more torturous minutes of pushing, lots of sweating and screaming, so much swearing under her breath, her mind screaming this was it, she was never having a baby again, and the baby was out.

“It’s a boy!” the doctor said as he pulled the bundle of flesh from her womb. The nurse then swept the baby off and cleaned him up.

Once the baby had been all cleaned up, he was brought to Daniel, as the nurses helped Naomi to clean up and change. Daniel and Naomi were both beaming with joy. He kissed both mother and child, raising the baby in the air as though it were a trophy just won! Naomi was exhausted from the long, tiring delivery and wanted to take a nap but didn’t want to miss any of the beautiful moments of their first child.

The next day, Daniel hadn’t returned to the hospital to check on her or the baby; nor had he called. She was tired of being at the hospital. Her family and friends had come and gone. She was ready to go too. The nurse told Naomi that since there were no complications and both she and the baby were doing fine, she would discuss a possible afternoon discharge with the doctor. Naomi packed everything up, anxious to leave. Fortunately, the doctor signed her discharge papers and once she had everything together, she called Daniel. And, of course, he didn’t answer. Still mad at him for coming late for their child’s delivery, she left him a nasty message.

“This is your bag-punching baby mama. In case you are interested, the doctor is releasing me and your son this afternoon. It would be nice if you would leave your whores for a second and be here to pick us up.” She hung up without saying good-bye. To her surprise, Daniel was at the hospital thirty minutes after she left him the message.

A week after leaving the hospital, Daniel started acting up. At first, he was there for Naomi’s every need: getting milk, pampers and even coming over to baby-sit so that Naomi could get a little sleep. Then all that slowly started to change. He started making excuses about why he couldn’t come around, and eventually started sending his assistant Lorna over to handle his business for him. At first Lorna would bring whatever Naomi told Daniel the baby needed. Then she began to bring money for Naomi to go get the stuff herself. She was hearing less and less of Daniel and more and more of Lorna.

Lorna always had an excuse for why Daniel couldn’t come through. It even got to a point where Naomi would leave him messages and Lorna would call back. That was the cue for Naomi to put Daniel in check.

She dialed his number, almost positive he wouldn't answer. She decided in advance that she would leave him a message so grimy, he wouldn't dare have Lorna respond to it for him.

The phone rang twice. She knew after three rings; his voice mail would pick up. She was prepared to spit knives through the phone.

"Hello," a female voice answered.

"Who the hell is this?" Naomi yelled, ready to attack.

"Naomi, it's me. Calm down," Lorna said in her best school teacher voice.

Naomi hated being talked down at in that manner, as though she were a child. "What are you doing with Daniel's phone?"

"He gave it to me to hold on to just in case someone called, someone like you. He has a new phone."

"Wait, What? Did you just ...?" Naomi stopped mid-sentence, biting her tongue

That was it! This man had truly violated her love and trust. She said nothing more and hung up. That would be the last time she ever dialed that number again.

# Two

**M**emory is the worst thing about healing. Naomi lay on the couch in her lonely apartment in Naguru, unwilling to do anything, her mind wandering, beating herself for bringing a child into this cruel world. Where was Daniel when she needed him the most? She could not understand the drift between them. What had happened?

Naomi and Daniel had first met in her Master's degree final year on a hot steamy afternoon at a concert in the Kampala Serena hotel. It was so hot that the eyes in the upper portion of the indoor venue could see the humidity hovering over the concert-goers' heads below them. Maddox was in concert and had begun to sing "Namagembe." His stunning performance put the entire room in a daze. Daniel was standing two rows behind Naomi, and as their hands were flowing

from side to side under Maddox's instructions, Daniel turned his head left as Naomi turned hers right. And their eyes met. Then they smiled. Daniel dropped his arms and walked over to Naomi. Her soft eyes, luscious full lips and chocolate skin had blown Daniel away.

“Hello.....my name is Danny.” He extended his hand.

“Hi....I'm Naomi.” She placed her hand into his and they stayed that way until the end of the song and then some more.

Daniel and Naomi spent a hell of a night together. They took a long walk and chased each other playfully. They talked, laughed and sang. Naomi knew right away that this was the man for her because up to that point she had only been on a walk around Kampala in the middle of the night like, never! Daniel was the man she had been dreaming about. One that would entice her to take chances, one who would convince her to wade into the deepest waters. One man enough to scream and sing out as loud as they did on the streets of Parliamentary Avenue that night. A man that took abrupt stops, and highs and lows with her, while never letting go of her hand. In the beginning, that

was what Daniel was. Full of promises, hope and so much fun.

Daniel was Naomi's first. He was the first man that she had thought about every hour of the day. The first man she had ever introduced to her family and friends. The first man to make her feel like she was the most special person a man could ever imagine being with. The first man she had felt comfortable around. The first man she ever thought about having children with. She wondered if all the "firsts" were the reasons Daniel was tearing their relationship apart. She questioned: if she were a wild, overbearing, big-hoop-earring-wearing hoochie who called him out at his every move, throwing tantrums and being overly demanding, would he treat her the same way? This description fitted the girls he was cheating on her with.

Naomi had thought about changing her style to suit him whenever Daniel strayed. But that was not who she was, the circumstances around her life had forced her to drastically change into a rude and overbearing woman. Naomi was a gentle, reserved, caring soul who wanted to be in love. She wanted to grow with her man and build a solid foundation. That is what her parents had modelled to her, that

was what she knew relationships to be.

Naomi's looks were definitely paying the bills. Her tall, chocolate, skinny self, loved to dress in classy clothes and hide the flaws of her small eyes and thin nose with carefully applied makeup. She was the full package; her face lit up a room when she smiled. She spoke with such grace, her mannerisms and disposition brought her listeners close to her. Somehow her siblings and friends thought she was too good for him. How did she get here, hung up on a man that did not value her? Why did she give him dozens of second chances when all he did was hurt her without flinching? Yet somehow, she loved him and couldn't let him go, she just couldn't.

# Three

Naomi grew up on High Street in Mbarara town. She was the only girl of five children. They weren't rich and weren't poor, but were somewhere in between, in that place where it can be difficult to make ends meet, and you just have enough to buy everything generic-brand. Their house was always a mess: laundry in piles, toys with missing pieces everywhere, never enough space for everyone. At the age of twelve when her mother died, the house and just about everything else fell into total despair. It was always dark inside. Life itself was smeared a dull grey: it smelled of dust and stale urine. To Naomi, it smelled like death.

She wished she remembered more about her mother. Her mother loved them, and never wasted a moment to let them know she did. She was a typical Muhiima woman with a thick waist, round face, and

dark hair like Naomi's. Her mother died in 1978 at the prime age of thirty-eight, one year younger than Naomi is. People loved her: she was very funny. Naomi watched her school teachers flee their classrooms to chat with her in the hallway whenever she came by. Each conversation ended with uncontrollable laughter, the kind adults try not to show in front of children. She was good.

Their mother was very active: president of the mother's union, a member of the Parish council, and a sisterhood troop leader. She loved a shelf she got at the flea market when Naomi was two. It was an old wooden tray that she cleaned and refinished, using steel wool and sandpaper. She put red velvet on the back and a glass frame on the front with pictures of what she called her perfect family, and she hung it horizontally on the wall, a rectangle full of smaller rectangles, ready to be filled with souvenirs, silver spoons, tiny vases and tinier vases. Naomi knew she desired a better life than they were living and would stop at nothing to work for it. Naomi later became a surgeon, defying all the odds that were against her.

The day her mother died, Naomi was at the home of her best friend, Melisa. Her brother came screaming uncontrollably. She held his hand and

they ran back home together. There were many strange people in the compound. They walked into the house and sat next to their mother's favourite shelf. Adults they didn't know stood in the living room staring at the five children as if they were on a stage and they were the audience. Their father walked over to where they were, and some adults started crying then. Their father who stood there for what seemed like forever, finally, quietly and as if he had been cued, said, "Your mother has passed away."

They both knew and did not know what he meant. 'Passed away' was all they got. The rest was a blur. Passed away! She did not cry, not then. She went out and played until it was dark. She did not attend the funeral either. Someone decided they weren't attending and they didn't. They only held hands and made their way toward the coffin, saw their stiff sleeping mother and realized right there and then, that she wasn't going to wake up.

On the day she turned eighteen, Naomi went to visit her mother's grave for the first time. It was very odd reading a headstone with her own name on it, knowing her body was right there, beneath the name

they shared, beautifully etched in granite. She had brought flowers, forget-me-nots and hydrangeas, like clusters of healthy cells. It was difficult for her being there, she missed her mother, she longed for her. She sat beside her mother's grave and wept. It was in that moment that she realized she was lonely. Life had changed radically at home, their father barely saying much but drinking always. Her brothers becoming unruly big bullies. Naomi had questions, she never really got to say a full goodbye. She felt somehow stuck. She wanted a mother to explain all the changes that were happening to her body, to go shopping with and laugh in the kitchen with about anything and everything. She needed the God her mother had served all those years to explain why he had to take her away from them. Couldn't he have chosen someone else? Why did he have to take their mother? Her mother was her first friend. She was unable to let go of the pain of losing her, afraid of losing love ever again, she had no idea how to let go. She visited the grave more after the first visit, carrying the same flowers every time and sitting beside the place where her mother's body lay and weeping, it was her way of letting out whatever was happening in her life.

# Four

“**S**orry Hun, I won’t make it. I’m in a little red car and I hear these are particularly susceptible to lighting fires,” Naomi echoed over the phone.

“It’s okay, I won’t say I’m not disappointed, but you do you.” Kenneth hang up!

This had been going on for weeks now and Naomi was slowly running out of excuses to not sleep with him. She could feel him slipping through her hands.

The pressure soon became unbearable and she gave in. Her virginity was gone in no time. They did it a couple more times. She loved Kenneth, she just never wanted to get intimate with him because he would never be hers alone. He went against every principle she believed in for relationships, he had her making bad decisions, but she was stuck with him

now that she was sleeping with him. He would take her for dinner and they would spend the night at a hotel. He would leave in the early hours and tell his wife he was working late. She didn't see Kenneth at Christmas, New Year's or Valentine's day, but none of that mattered to her. She knew he had a wife, and she let him get on with whatever he needed to do because the sneaking around somehow fascinated her. He made time for her whenever he could, and she enjoyed his company. He made her feel wanted, needed, and that kept her going. She chose to block out his marriage. She did feel guilty about the affair, if she let herself think about it, but she couldn't turn off her feelings for him. It was too late. She was sucked in.

Kenneth was the Specialist Surgeon at Case clinic. She had met him while she worked as a medical intern after school and he had charmed his way into her life, flirting with her, giving her opportunities to advance her career and social status. She was concluding her first medical degree and he would introduce her to universities for her Master's degree, recommending her to different international universities and professors that would

help along her academic ladder. He often travelled with her under the guise of 'personal research assistant'. He took her to Italy and Greece for their first months' anniversary. It was a beautiful trip, she loved ancient cities and this was more than amazing for her. The thought, the care, the commitment, it was all there. She was deeply in love. She was aware he was not going to leave his wife and two children but as time went on, she was happy, he was happy. They both adjusted to the new normal.

Then it took a turn. Her period was late, and she began to feel funny. A horrible metallic taste developed in her mouth, along with sore breasts and a bit of nausea. She couldn't think of the worst, she chose not to think of the worst, after all they had been careful; condoms, withdraw method, but nothing was a hundred percent reliable as she was soon to find out.

She kept going to the bathroom to check. Hours turned into days and a sinking feeling grew in her stomach. She sat on the toilet seat one day, legs shaking, heart beating faster than a speeding car, with her HCG stick in her hands praying it would stop at one line. Her limbs went numb and shivers

shot through her spine as she watched it move past the first line to the second.

She couldn't see him. She pretended she was busy with school. She needed to think. She couldn't tell him, how could she? This was not part of the deal. They didn't talk about his wife much, he had only broken the news of his marriage at dinner one evening and she had cried and stormed off. He had continued to pursue her until she gave in. The deal was to have fun, scratch each other's backs with no expectation! Kenneth and Naomi had their own routine that had turned into their world, but they had never discussed a future together. She knew he loved his wife and had no intentions of leaving her, and she had never thought that was what she herself wanted.

When the doctor confirmed she was pregnant, she felt sick. The news hit her like a door slamming in her face.

"No, it's not possible. He pulled out. How can I be pregnant?" Naomi muttered under her breath, confused.

She wanted a baby, she just couldn't keep this one. It wasn't fair on him. He was married, had a family of his own, it was very clear to her she

couldn't keep the baby. It wasn't fair on her either, she was not ready to be a mother yet. She had plans, dreams for her future that didn't involve being a single mother. How could she break this news to her siblings, friends and church? Ashamed for sleeping with a married man, condemning herself for getting pregnant out of wedlock, she couldn't face this sad truth. Her world had just hit auto pause, the fantasy she had lived a few months before was now a curse. Her affair with Kenneth had started as a joke. She knew he would never be hers alone to fulfil her relationship goals, but he met her every need and she was happy. She was ashamed too of the woman she had become, her mother would have been disappointed, yet she chose to stay, afraid she may never find love away from Kenneth. She could have got support from her supportive brothers and made ends meet financially and had the baby on her own. But how awful that would have been. The child would be his too, it would look like him and be his own flesh and blood. There was no other way out of this but to have an abortion. It would be her secret, no one had to know.

She went to the clinic with her best friend Melisa who sat in the waiting room while she went in. The room was cold. She was asked to take off her shoes and underwear. The doctor seemed rough, he didn't talk much, only pointed to what he needed done. He looked like he had done this before and was not ready for small talk. She ascended the small bed covered with blue linen and opened her legs. There was a small sink in the room and the pale old walls were covered with reproductive health charts. A very old clock chimed away on the dirty wall reminding her God could strike her dead anytime. A syringe and tube-like substance was inserted in her vagina and the sucking felt like no pain she had ever experienced in her entire life.

“Are you sure this was only five weeks?” the doctor asked continuing to empty the huge syringe of what seemed like very thick blood in the sink.

“Yes.” Naomi slurred in pain.

“It can't be, this is too much blood for a five-week pregnancy.” He inserted the tube between her legs once again.

She begged the doctor to stop but he wouldn't hear of it until he was done.

He asked her to lie on her side for a few minutes

while he prepared her bill and medication. Tears ran down her face as she lay there shaking.

“I have just murdered someone. I have killed my child!” she thought.

Walking towards Melisa, she wiped her eyes and said nothing. They went back to hostel and Melisa stayed to make sure Naomi was okay. Of course, she wasn't okay. The grief was overwhelming. She had killed a child! It was a heart wrenching realisation and a wake-up call. She felt guilty for days, that turned into months, and the grief would carry on for years. She didn't want to have a conversation with him. She didn't want him to feel pressured into doing the 'right' thing, there was no right thing under the circumstances. No one could judge Naomi more than she judged herself. This affair ended as quickly as it had started. Scarring her, leaving her feeling empty and worthless. It changed her immensely. Naomi became bitter and the guilt snuffed out every ounce of joy from her being. Leaving her persona cold, dark and more insecure, she adopted smoking and drinking to bury her shame. She often looked at younger girls who kept their babies and wished she had kept hers too. How would God ever forgive her, how would she live with this secret?



# Five

**D**aniel Ojara stood frozen still. The reflection of his dark-skinned face against the dark-tinted windows inside the airport showed signs of worry and deep trouble. Drama and conflict had once again moved into his life like a slithering snake and he was the only one to blame. He was seriously guilt tripping.

Daniel was almost certain that an anonymous person had stood on tip-toe on one of the few skyscrapers in Kampala, Uganda, and zoomed down on him with the most powerful lens ever made. His every move through the night had been brought to light, unmasking the dirt he had thrown at his beloved Naomi. When the evidence was laid before him with blow-by-blow accounts of his stealth unveiled, Daniel had no come back from the excess drooling, stunned-eyed, wobbly-standing, eight-count posture

he'd immediately fallen into. Round one: room verification. Round two: time of day. Round three: Name of the lady. Round four: Confirmation that a well-hyped fabricated mandatory business meeting didn't take place. These were the counterpunches Naomi had thrown in his face that broke Daniel down into submission. Her flurry had instantly made her lover concede and acknowledge wrongdoing. So quickly in fact, that Daniel's mind hadn't had a chance to create a lie if he had chosen to.

'Who in the world could have seen me?' Daniel's thoughts pounded while his eyes were still glued to the airport runway. He was so deep in thought, that the sound of the roaring engines of the airplanes barely registered. "Damn – the topic of scandal again." He sighed, checking his watch then double checking it when he realized he had been standing in the same spot for three hours. Daniel had been day-dreaming and tormenting himself at the same time. The continual flash of Naomi's sad face playing repeatedly in his mind made Daniel feel like he wanted to go out onto the run way and sprawl out underneath the landing gear of a 747.

Daniel was sick about letting his guard down and letting the traits and mannerisms of a nasty, ill-

fated, hapless dog with razor-sharp teeth take control of him the way it did. He wondered how ferocious he must have looked to Naomi, his love of ten years, when she found out that once again he couldn't flee lurking lust. Daniel and all his five-foot-ten, brown-eyed, dreadlock-haired, thin bearded, dark-skinned self was unable to do what he promised to himself and to Naomi after his last bout with the devil that was: to *not fool around*.

“Can a brutha get a ‘hello, how was your flight’ or something?” Tony Mukasa said as he stood eye to eye with his best friend, smiling with his arms extended. Tony was dressed in a black, half-length leather jacket, blue jeans and a pair of Lugz loafers. His sparkling teeth stood out against his dark skin, and his brown bedroom eyes narrowed nicely when he smiled. His arching eyebrows were dark, close to wavy. Tony looked like he had maybe got a haircut before he boarded the plane. His hair was cut coarse and close and his goatee was lined perfectly, touching his thin moustache at the same spot on each side. He still appeared like he could be a better-than-average sprinter; his body was lean and looked as though he worked out from time to time. Daniel

was so into his thoughts he hadn't even realized the flight he had been waiting on had finally arrived.

"What's up.... you, all right?" Daniel asked, reaching out to Tony and greeting him with a half-hearted hug.

Tony stepped back from the careless embrace and tapped Daniel on the arm, "Ya, I'm all right. The question is, are you alright?"

Daniel looked around, he was still feeling irritated and agitated as though the zoom lens was still on his ass. "Come on, let's get your bags and get the hell out of here, Tony."

The wait for the luggage seemed longer to Daniel than the entire time he had spent at the airport. He remained in his zone. His eyes were glued to the conveyer belt, waiting for it to spit out the bags. Tony looked at the conveyer belt, then at Daniel. Then at the conveyer belt and back at Daniel again.

"Fascinated by that, huh?"

Daniel didn't respond.

"Daniel? .... Daniel?" Tony called out.

Daniel took his hand and ran it down his beard, then placed his hands in his pants pockets

as he exhaled, trying to release his tightening love tensions.

“Ya. Did you say something?” Daniel asked.

“Yooo!!! Of course, I did,” Tony announced.

“What? What is it?”

“Man, what the hell is going on with you?”

Daniel just shook his head.

“You know what? You’re acting the same way you were when I left.”

Daniel looked at Tony and Tony read his eyes.

“Awwwwwwww, man, don’t tell me. Do not tell me!” Tony stiffly pronounced.

“I won’t then.” Just then Tony’s bags began to emerge from the conveyer belt and Daniel kept his eyes on the bags as Tony moved a couple of steps away from him. He looked back at Daniel, wondering how he could have let this happen again. Tony had a great memory, and this was like Deja vu; except the last time this had happened he was moving to Kigali. Now here he was back in Kampala, and nothing had changed. Tony just shook his head as his mind took him back to a month before he left.

Tony had decided that he'd had enough of Uganda: at least that's what he had led Daniel to believe and his excuse had been received unexpectedly well. Without warning, he was moving away to Kigali to get away from it all and journey to new opportunities in Rwanda. Tony's vision of Daniel's stained eyes and nervous motion was unforgettable: Daniel had been most sorrowful, dejected and heartbroken at the announcement. But the most bizarre element of it all was that Daniel didn't investigate why Tony was really leaving town. He'd been way too involved in the drama he had caused Naomi. So, when Tony had asked Daniel to take him to the airport, that was exactly what he did. He only found out months later that Tony had been running away from committing to marrying his long-time love. Daniel's look now was identical to the moment at his departure when Tony had thought he was going to cry. It had been the first time Daniel had fooled around on Naomi.

Tony remembered how Daniel had met Lisa and asked to buy her a drink. A couple of days later Daniel took the plunge and brought Lisa to the hotel and knocked boots with her. Lisa had no

inkling of the personality, charm, or grace that had always blown Daniel's mind about Naomi nor that she existed. But she did have a way with words. Lisa was blunt, to the point, plain old exact. She was an expert with flirtatious expressions, movements, and suggestions. She always smiled and was carefree, not afraid to tell how good her sex was. Daniel's zest for Lisa had been strictly of the sexual nature. Her lanky legs and 'so good' strut had been too appealing for Daniel to let pass by. When she had said to him while they stood in front of the hotel door, "Don't take one step in there, if you're not going to give it to me right," it was the last straw. He opened the door, and for five non-stop hours, that's what Daniel did. Seven years of commitment and truth had gone to the drain for three hundred minutes of nonstop sex.

"Are your bags going to jump off this thing and walk over to you or what?" Daniel hollered over at Tony.

"Man, grab the bags let's go," Tony mouthed back.

"So, what happened?" Tony asked as soon as Daniel slammed his car door shut.

"Nothing, ... Nothing, but Naomi finding out about me and Viola, and the two of them having

a four-hour conversation over the phone about everything Viola and I did last month. Besides that, nothing, ... nothing's wrong. I just love my boring-ass life in this ugly city. I don't even know why you came back. Just look at this place, Tony, it hasn't rained in almost a week."

Tony didn't want to hear any bad comments about Kampala or Uganda for that matter. It was bad enough he wasn't just visiting. He took a long, extended breath, trying to get over his reality. He was to be the heir of his father's estate as soon as the burial ceremony was done with; a life he detested, yet had no choice. At the same time, it was hard not to compare Kampala to Kigali. It was just like he remembered and exactly like what he and all his friends complained about continuously years ago.

First, Kampala was crowded, and most people walked around with the same attitude of, "Ohhh, I'm just trying to make it" or 'I'm still living,' or 'I'm around-around, there-there.' The city always seemed depressing, it didn't deserve the title 'capital city.' Nothing vital or grand happened there, except for an occasional city carnival that didn't benefit anyone, and an overwhelmingly extravagant night life that impoverished the citizens.

“How did she find out?” Tony sighed, thinking about what he had come back to.

“Tony, I don’t know.”

Tony could hear Daniel’s disgust with himself. “What do you mean you don’t know?” Tony looked at Daniel as though he was one of the dumbest cats in the city.

“She didn’t say how she found out – and it doesn’t matter anyway, she knows.”

Tony Chuckled; he already knew the answer to the question he was about to ask. “Refresh my memory, how many times have you cheated on Naomi?”

Daniel looked over at Tony. “Three times. Viola makes the third time .....why? You already knew that.”

“And how many times have you been caught?”

“Three times.”

“Unbelievable, man.”

“What?” Daniel asked

“I just don’t understand how you could get caught every time you decide to fool around. I know some guys who have messed around, cheated, made booty calls, or whatever you want to call it,

then washed their hands and moved on, done with their past, but nooooooo, not you! You're just unbelievable. You always get caught."

"This city is too small. You can't go anywhere without seeing someone that you have met at one time or another. You cannot play Casanova in this town, especially when you have a lady that people have seen you all over the city with. That's rule number one.

"You're right, you're right," Daniel said dejectedly.

"I don't know how many times I have to tell you Daniel, if you are going to be a player, you've got to think like one." Tony noticed cd's on the dashboard and picked them up.

"I'm not a player, Tony." Daniel tried his best to sound like he meant what he said.

"Oh, you don't have to convince me! I'm your boy, I have your back. Believe that, okay?" Tony said in a lower tone while checking out the cd's.

"Cheat three times, get caught three times, you sure the hell aren't a player," Tony mumbled. "What? You're listening to church music now? What do we have here? Fred Hammond, Trin-i-tee, Marvin Sapp, Planet Shakers, Harvest Music."

Daniel looked over at the cd's and grabbed them from Tony. "Give me those," he insisted. "It's not church music. Its inspirational."

Tony huffed sarcastically.

"Look man, I have been having conversations with the old man and I realize he is very disappointed with my unserious lifestyle. He has been praying for me to settle down, to take responsibility for my life. He appointed me overseer at the law firm and I blew it. His illness is not leaving me any choices, I must turn my life around, if not for myself, for him. I'm going to change, and I'm going to prove to you that I can change if it's the last thing I ever do. I am going to fix everything." Daniel assured Tony.



# Six

**M**r. Ojara Ivan: Daniel's father owned the biggest law firm in town. He was a wealthy and honourable man, serving his community and church, blessing everyone he met with his wisdom and generosity. Having given birth to only one boy and one girl, he had so much hope in the son taking over the family business. Daniel's father had been diagnosed with lupus and he wasn't sure how much time he had to live. Losing his wife, a year after his diagnosis pushed him to depression and worsened his illness. He had spent years preparing his son, taking him to law school, sending him to the best universities and linking him to the right people to ensure he was ready to take over the family business yet he was disappointed by Daniel's behaviour every time. He tried to be a good model for his son regarding the issues of life, but Daniel had other

plans, he just wanted to enjoy life. In his vocabulary, that translated as partying and spending money on different women whenever. In a bid to make his father happy, Daniel had accepted to take on the job at the law firm. Corner office, personal secretary, everything to make his work easy was at his disposal. All he had to do was show up daily and practice the family trade. Lorna his assistant took care of his every need, setting up dates for him, covering up for him, running errands and attending meetings he was too hang-over from a previous party to attend. He didn't understand the sacrifice. He had started drinking after his mother went to be with the lord, occasionally sneaking the alcohol and weed into the house until it became an addiction. Amid all the chaos and drinking, Daniel still managed to say the Lord's prayer just the way his mother taught him. This he did out of routine and a deep-seated fear that his mother might still be watching from some other world and he couldn't stand the thought of failing to appease her, even in death. He was the typical 'mummy's boy' and losing her had dealt a blow he only covered up with sleeping with whoever availed herself to him to find comfort.

Daniel's sister often bailed him out of jail for drunk driving and she never stopped praying for

him in her church cell to find peace and settle down. He often boasted about how many women he had conquered and de-flowered until Naomi came along. After meeting Naomi, his family rejoiced, he loved her so much he stopped drinking and late-night partying, for a while. His lifestyle changed, and he was thriving in business. Daniel and Naomi shared a lot in common and found comfort in being there for each other. Daniel wanted to kill the man that hurt Naomi after she had shared her deepest secret with him, her abortion story. He had sworn to avenge her tears and broken heart for he couldn't stand anyone hurting her. He protected her, stood by her and fought, if he had to, promised her the world. Naomi had not been loved so jealously before. They both had this yearning to feel bare and yet unashamed. To have someone see through them and still love them anyway. To bear no secrets. This is what they had both been longing for; understanding and love. And they had become each other's solace.

Months passed, and Naomi didn't see or hear from Daniel. Luckily, the last drop Lorna made for Daniel was enough to cover the bills and provide for the baby for the rest of the year. She had to

start planning her money hustle for the next year, which meant less time with the baby and more work, because there was no way she was going to be begging Daniel for child support.

She was in a good mood; her body was getting back in shape and she couldn't wait to flaunt it. Her baby was looking good, her heart was getting over the hurt from Daniel's betrayal. She called up a couple of friends to see if they wanted to go to the club. Although the club wasn't her forte, she really needed to go out and blow off some steam. It seemed as though childbirth had widened her hips, and she couldn't wait to put a little twist in them.

She and her girls decided that they'd meet up at The Wink, a bar at Acacia avenue. Daniel's sister agreed to baby sit and Naomi's brother let her borrow the jeep. She walked into The Wink, didn't spot any of her girls and decided to go over to the bar and start the party without them. Just as she was beginning to get nice and tipsy, her girls turned up and as she got up to hug each of them, she spotted Daniel at the extreme end of the bar hanging around some girl. Not only was she pissed that he was with another female, she was also pissed that he was there at all. Praying to all her guardian angels,

she got up and walked out of the bar. She didn't feel very well. Her night was officially ruined. She had to leave immediately.

She headed to the exit, rushing to get some fresh air. She didn't even let her friends know she was leaving, they were pre-occupied with ordering shots of whiskey. She just left, planning to call them once she got herself together. Once outside, she decided to sit in the car for a minute and get her head right. Ten minutes hadn't passed before she saw Daniel drive by with the girl in the passenger seat of his new range rover. She couldn't believe her eyes, she hadn't even had a chance to break the leather in good on the passenger seat, she was furious as she watched them pull out of the parking lot. The liquor must have had her going, because she started the jeep and followed them. She wasn't sure where they were heading, but it did seem familiar. Daniel pulled into a dark parking lot in the middle of nowhere near a pier and parked. Naomi passed their car, swerving and parked around the corner. She then stumbled back to the place where Daniel had parked and slowly approached the car. From a far she could see the girls' head bobbing up and down, and could hear Daniel moaning. Her stomach began to ache with anxiety. She couldn't

take it anymore. She rushed to the driver's side of the car and started banging the window.

The girl quickly sat up, shaking in her seat. Naomi looked directly at her, paying no attention to Daniel. She would deal with him later.

“Lorna! You lying bitch!” Naomi yelled as she opened the door and jumped over Daniel, attempting to kill Lorna.

Grabbing her by the neck with a grip of death with the left hand and punching her in the face with her right, she dragged her out of the car and nearly beat her delirious before Daniel pulled her away. The Scorned Naomi, despite the mixed emotions she felt, seized the opportunity and jumped into the car, locked the two outside and drove off. Shaking uncontrollably, she managed to dial Melisa's number from Daniel's phone that was lying in the car and requested her to pick up the Jeep. She would narrate this story to her friends in camera, after diagnosing what had just gone down.

Naomi had last been this shaken and worrisomely frantic so many years ago after her mother's demise when her uncle attempted to rape her, and her father did not believe her. Not that she had ever heard his

side of the story, but his indifference to the matter had made her so distant from him it hurt. She and her siblings had been home alone, as they often were, playing. A mattress was still in their living room from where their Uncle had stayed the night. He was chasing her, wrestling, it was always her kind of game. One minute they were laughing and jumping around the mattress, and the next he was pushing a blanket or pillow or something over her face and trying to yank down her shorts. It probably took her a full half a second to realize what was going on. She wasn't shocked it was him, it wasn't the first time he had been weird, like the night she found him breathing over her while she slept but this was the first REAL something.

Laughter turned into screams, as she kicked and scratched at him, the whole while with one hand holding onto her shorts. She refused! Refused to let him get them down. She fought with everything she had in her petite body and tried with all her strength to get away from him. It could have been a minute, or it could have been an hour, it's blurry in her head, but she fought, ... fought, ... fought.

She waited for her father to return and narrated the tale. He asked her, "are you sure?"

Never in her life had she ever felt so small and unimportant. Looking back, she asked herself,

“Was I sure? Was I sure that he was trying to rape me? Was I sure that I had just fought to save my virginity from someone who is supposed to love me and not hurt me? was I sure this person I loved and respected had just tried and failed to rape me?” she thought.

Everyone had moved on then like nothing had happened. Her brothers had been so engrossed in the game, they thought her screaming was part of it all. She never told anyone that he tried again, or that he had been weird before the first attempt. She couldn't risk being accused of hallucinating or making stories up to hurt adults. And for years she felt like she owed him something, like absolution or to pretend none of it ever happened, but it did. She clung to her mother's favourite shelf and wept until she felt better, and moved on like the rest of the household. Only no one ever moves on just like that from such mishaps.

There are some stories that never get told. There are some that stay locked away, deep inside, never to see the light of day. But when they stay in the dark, they fester, grow and latch into good things, making

them bad. All these bottled up emotions and this life with Daniel were slowly becoming such stories, the ones that break you so hard inside you cannot garner the courage to ever tell them. She carried the pity party to her room, after all her baby was safe with Daniel's sister, dark chocolate in one hand a bottle of wine in another.

Naomi's little brother witnessed the end of the fight and followed her to her apartment, she was too drunk to tell the story, too angry to be consoled but he stayed. Allowing her to punch him and throw a tantrum. And when she was tired, he sat there with her in the dark, plotting his revenge for Daniel as Naomi blacked out. He tucked her in and left to find Daniel.



# Seven

Naomi woke up the next afternoon to so much noise as though a scuffle at her door step and a ballistic headache from all the drinking the night before. The shouting seemed to be escalating right in her ear. Daniel seemed to be begging Melisa to let him into the house as she guarded the door like a professional body guard. Naomi's young brother was daring Daniel to set foot into the house if he thought he was man enough, swinging a golf club as though to suggest no hesitation to use it if the need arose. Was she hallucinating? She pinched her arm to make sure it wasn't a bad dream she was having.

“What the fuck are you doing here Danny?” she yelled grabbing whatever her hands could land on and hurling them at him.

She ran to the kitchen and grabbed a knife, walking towards him screaming, “You asshole!”

“Please don’t kill me! Don’t kill me! I didn’t mean to hurt you baby, I don’t know what comes over me, I love you babe, I do, just give me a chance to talk to you, I want to make things right by you, I am so sorry baby” Daniel begged

“So, the jokes’ on me, huh? I know you so well. What do you think is going to happen here huh? Oh, you think you are just going to waltz in here with flowers and I’m going to welcome you with open arms? Get the hell out of my house you cheat, lying son of a ....” Naomi broke down into tears.

Melisa held her friend who was now weeping as Daniel found his way to the door.

“I’m sorry Naomi, I didn’t mean to hurt you, I just want to apologize. Despite the circumstances, and the state of our hearts right now, we are going to be alright, we will be happy again. I know it.” Daniel begged.

“We?? There is no we here man, I won’t repeat what she said, get lost” her brother shouted chasing Daniel towards the gate.

“Leave my house now, if you know what is good for you!” Naomi screamed through her teeth.

“If that’s meant for us all, I am not leaving you until you feel better.” Melisa told Naomi, holding her so tight to comfort her.

Daniel knew he had to leave, even though all he wanted to do was stay and beg her forgiveness. He had not seen her this angry ever! It broke his heart seeing her like that and right there and then, he knew something had to give. He had to change his life, physically, spiritually and in all ways. He kept trying to get in touch in vain. He called, showed up unannounced, sent millions of letters and with every attempt, Daniel became more remorseful for taking Naomi’s love for granted.

Daniel had been so close to losing his father that he ended up blindly sleeping with his assistant Lorna. Pretty lousy excuse, right? Well, the evening before he had been to the hospital to see his father who was in bad shape, Lorna offered a shoulder to lean on and one thing led to another, she asked to buy him one drink and behold! the one drink broke hell loose. It was now that he was beginning to understand the gravity of his recklessness that evening.

As he walked away from Naomi's house, his father's words echoed in his mind, "Find the woman you love Daniel and commit to only her, do not allow the devil to have a hold over your life. Temptations will come, but if you resist them, they will flee."

He realized that love was real, precious, and thoughtful, but he had always known that, only this time he was getting a revelation about his ways and he finally grasped what love was not. It was not how he had loved. Very far from what he had rendered to Naomi. For the first time he heard a voice within speak, he felt a sort of spiritual awakening. "*Daniel, you have heard and experienced the words of true love. Words that were sent by me through many little things that you have ignored. I have received many prayers, you have been blessed and have received another chance....*" He blinked, and the voice faded away. He realized that his father's prayers concerning his life had been delivered.

Daniel spent days pondering the words that had been whispered to his ears. He shared with his sister and she advised that they pray together over the matter, which they did. He was restless, he needed to get Naomi's forgiveness at whatever cost. He had wronged her, and he needed to make amends.

# Eight

“**Y**ou are going to what? man, you must be delusional!” Tony laughed out loud. “I’m hoping, ... okay? I just want her to give me one more chance, so I can make it up to her, make her proud of me. I’ve done a lot of thinking and praying. I want to marry Naomi, make her my wife.”

“Pra what? You, praying!!! hahahahahahaha, this is worse than I thought,” Tony muttered. “But I’m telling you, don’t even try proposing now. She will definitely turn you down,” Tony said, enjoying every bit of how this conversation was going.

“My mind is telling me it’s the right thing to do though.” Daniel shot back.

“Man, if I were Naomi and you asked me to marry you, I would leave your ass at the altar.” Tony gave Daniel a look only true friends can give, then he pointed toward a lady on the side walk strutting

down the street. “See, now that’s what you should be focusing your attention on. WWWKs!”

“Nope! that’s okay, I’ll pass.” Daniel insisted sharply.

“Look, you are not going to change, Daniel, so why put yourself through the trouble of trying to settle down now? ‘Women with Kids’ are better anyway. I have realized that they are my type. I really do hate to see women all alone trying their best to take care of kids without a man. I was made to save them. They want me for a moment and so do I, they get along with their nonstop lives. Satisfaction guaranteed!” Tony bragged.

“Forget that Tony. Look at my parents, Mother died knowing she was truly loved, and the old man says he never cheated on her even once, don’t you want that man? I want to be like that, deep inside I know I do, I just don’t know what happens to me. Naomi was right about us and our lives. Just look at us. We’re in our forties and are still running around here like we don’t have a care in the world. It’s really getting old.”

“It’s funny to me how people get in trouble, then suddenly, miraculously begin to want to do the right thing after being caught,” Tony said.

“There’s nothing wrong with that, Tony. At least I’ve realized I need to make amends.” Daniel ran his hand down his beard.

“The only thing you have realized, Daniel, is the fact that you don’t know how to go out and get laid on the down low without getting caught.” Tony scoffed

“I’m serious, Tony, look at us man, walking around beginning to look like our fathers and their fathers and not even trying to make a legacy for others to follow. We’re about to become just another unknown fixture of this city, and I always told myself I wouldn’t settle for that. Look at us, working great jobs, thanks to our father’s and not building on the wealth they have trusted us with. That’s no kind of legacy, and I definitely didn’t leave law school with that in mind.” Daniel scratched the top of his head.

“I have been dating Naomi for almost ten years and I have nothing to show for it except for crazy arguments, scandals and failed goals. And the funny thing about all this is that we aren’t getting any younger, so it’s not going to get any easier.”

“Like I said, every time a brutha gets caught up in a scandal, they want to perpetrate and run

to marriage. Nope, don't even try it Daniel, it's not your kind of life." Tony advised.

"well its different now. I have realized that my father has been right all this time and I am giving God a shot, after all what do I have to lose? It may take time, but I am going to change." Daniel Declared.

"Good luck bro, I'll be here when you get caught cheating again." Tony laughed at his desperate friend.

# Nine

Daniel was gleaming equal to a school boy on Christmas day. He could see his new residence a top Muyenga Hill, located outside the city, on the outskirts of town where he would find peace and happiness. The location and design of Daniel's house represented his spiritual world and personality. It was a beautiful, luxurious house, identical to the home he'd promised to Naomi repeatedly that one day they'd share together. Daniel had been to the house many times in the last month; to pray over it and dedicate it to God, nevertheless, his gaze remained on his new domain as though it was the first time he had ever laid eyes on it. He was pleased, gratified, plain old tickled to death with the sight progressing towards his eyes.

The house was a huge three-story dream on a ten- acre plot. As he approached the living room, he

was surrounded by four columns leading to the most elegant doors he had ever seen. They were made of mahogany and had stained glass window in the centre. The handles and the frame were made of brass. As he continued around the house, he came across three windows overlooking the entrance, there were black shutters in each window. The house's walls were made of stucco and it had old fashioned shingles that were a clay colour. Surrounded by a big garden, full of flowers and trees, the house was a beautiful web. The front garden was full of flowers, bushes and fruit trees, the scent of the flowers and fruit trees mixed in the air reminding him of heavenly moments filled with joy and calm. The back garden had a swimming pool with a surrounding flower bed and small garden where they would plant their own tomatoes, egg plants, parsley and do other simple gardening.

It smelled like new carpet and fresh paint, devoid of objects but more importantly, of memories. These were yet to be made. He watched as the movers dumped the boxes containing his life on the floor and heard the thump echo off the empty walls. He did what every experienced nomad would do: visualize where all his things would go to make the

rooms familiar. He could hear his mother directing the movers in his head. His mother's voice had been a constant reminder of how irresponsible he had become but also of how much faith she had in him and a nudge to how fast he needed to reconcile with his love. He knew he had to win Naomi's heart back, this house needed a woman's touch. He had not given up pursuing Naomi and once he was sure he was making head way, he visited Naomi's father and sought permission to ask for her hand in marriage. He had been distant from his daughter, but he appreciated the gesture of honour and knew the one thing his daughter would treasure from him was a memory of her late mother. He was so overjoyed at the news, he offered him the first piece of furniture, Naomi's mother's favourite shelf from the fleecy market.

Daniel was so astonished by his home, God had been so good to him it seemed too good to be true. He sat down at the swimming pool and edited a poem he had written for Naomi, reciting it out loud to himself, it had to be perfect. He was not making any mistakes this time, he would hand it to her over a scheduled dinner later that evening. The restaurant was well

thought out, with lots of class and a personal touch to all the things Naomi loved. Her favourite band, candles, great food and beautiful weather. She was nicely arrayed in a beautiful red dress and Dorothy Perkins heels for the dinner, and he was a nervous wreck. His white shirt made his eyes pop and as the romantic evening came to the end, he pulled out the poem and read to her;

*“I know I made our lives a mess,  
because I'm such a jerk  
I know I've caused you so much stress,  
and now you think I'm dirt*

*I know I make the worst mistakes,  
we both know that is true  
I know right now I have the shakes,  
it's my fault cause I hurt you*

*I know you think I can't improve,  
my actions have said so much  
I know you think it's time to move,  
but I can't live without your touch*

*I know you want a better life,  
that you think I can't provide  
I know you want to be a wife,  
and show the world your pride*

*I know I really need to prove,  
how much for you I care  
You know I wrote this poem for you,  
Babe, this to you I swear”*

Naomi was caught off guard, could not say a word. Blushing, she excused herself and let her tears flow in the restaurant bathroom. She really loved this man, no matter what he did, her heart was sold. She was only afraid of letting him have her again. She returned and sat across the table from Daniel, still not saying a word.

“Did I say something wrong?” Daniel seemed concerned.

“No, ... no, I’m just pondering the things you just read.

“Would you like to dance?” he alluringly asked

“Sure, that would be nice” Naomi smiled and got up to join another couple that was already on the dance floor.

He quickly picked the bill and ushered her to the dance floor, later luring her to the street and chasing her, playing and singing as they had done when they had first met.

He silently thanked God for the beautiful evening, knowing he was winning her back slowly.



# Ten

**H**is heart beat at a rabbit's pace as he walked up the tiled steps to Naomi's apartment block. He took a deep breath to allow even a sliver of calm to permeate the sense of dread that engulfed his mind and body. Daniel stole a quick glance at his wing man, Tony, briefly grateful that he didn't have to do this completely alone. He had been praying and trying to prepare Naomi for this moment, but he still wasn't certain the answer would be yes. His biggest fear: rejection, was now almost staring him in the face but he couldn't abandon this cause. His mind was made. They pressed the door bell and the house facilitator directed them to a room off to the right which was Naomi's neatly laid out living room. They sat down overlooking a small table that was accompanied by about a dozen miniature books and waited for Naomi. The wait seemed endless.

Daniel began pacing the living room floor. He was so nervous because he knew this story would be shared to generations to come, he had to get it right.

“How did he pop the question?” was inevitably the first thing her friends would ask her after the engagement, “I must make it a story worth sharing.” he thought.

Daniel and Naomi had been dating on and off for ten years, they had a son together, one would in fact say an official marriage proposal was way overdue. He had listened over the years to some casually dropped hints, so he knew what would make her happy. Most of the preparation involved getting Naomi proposed to in her comfort space, her apartment. No drama, no photographers, a simple, yet romantic and genuine proposal was all she wanted. The ring took planning. Daniel decided to redesign Naomi’s late mother’s wedding ring, that had been given him by her father in preparation for this amazing event and he worked closely with a designer, creating exactly what Naomi would want. Daniel’s father was still bed-ridden but he had trained his Son on how a proper proposal must be done, casually dropping hints every so often.

Naomi walked into the room carrying their son and his weekend bag, after all Daniel had asked over dinner to spend the day with him, so she knew he was there with Tony to pick up Baby Leni for his daddy-son bonding day. Watching Daniel restless, she began to suspect something was up.

He asked Tony to take the baby and give them a moment, which Tony did without hesitation, it was part of the plan anyway, how could he resist?

“I have been hearing Voices, at first I thought it was just me being so in over my head about this newly discovered God, but then I realized it was God himself talking to me, giving me instructions on how to move on in my life. The voice told me to ask you a question, Naomi.”

Her eyes began to water. “What’s wrong?” Daniel moved closer to her and held her hand.

“Daniel, you may not believe me, but I heard a voice just before I came in here and it told me to get ready for a question, and it said that when I hear it, the question will be as genuine as the pure blue sky.”

“So? ... so... You already know what I am about to ask you, then?”

Naomi smiled. “N-n-not really, but I think I have a clue” she stammered.

This must be meant to be, baby! Because what I have ask you is pure and it’s genuine as the bluest of all skies.” Daniel held on to Naomi’s hand and dropped to his Knees right in the middle of her living room. Naomi began to cry.

“Naomi, I want you to know that I have tried everything in my power to get myself on the right track. I’ve cleansed myself and been cleansed by God and started off afresh, allowing and taking directions from only God.” Daniel kissed her hand and then looked at Naomi again as she put her arms around his neck.

“Naomi, would you do me the honour of making me the luckiest man in the world, accepting me in your life as your husband and Father to Leni, will you marry me?”

“I have been meeting with a few people and studying my bible. I know what my worth is, I also know that God is working at rebuilding my broken pieces. I also know that I don’t need anyone to make

me whole and acceptable, I am Enough. So, I am willing to risk this journey all over again with you Daniel, as God heals us both.” Naomi said carefully.

“Yes, I’ll marry you, Danny. Yes, I will marry you. Yes.



# Eleven

**F**our weeks after their luxurious wedding Naomi found a note in Daniel's Jacket, "Boo, thanks for a great evening. Love you" her heart sunk as she muttered a small prayer under her breath. Her head was telling her to remain calm, but her body was already fiercely walking towards Daniel.

"God please don't tell me he is cheating again, let there be a logical explanation to this," she said Amen as she rushed into the television room to confront him

'What the hell is this Danny? You are now boo huh? Naomi screamed shoving the piece of paper in his face.

"Babe, let me see, what are you talking about?" he asked looking at the piece of paper.

"Oh, you mean this, he said laughing his lungs out, come on babe, this is my baby sister's handwriting,

you can call to confirm she wrote it. I will never hurt u like that, ever. I made a vow to you before God!" Daniel said laughing at how stressed she looked.

Ashamed for over reacting, Naomi quickly changed the subject.

Daniel kissed her on her check and she melted into his arms as they lay on the carpet. She was on cloud nine. Her man was pleased, and she was full of life and courage to be a good wife.

"Baby, we're going to need protection," Naomi told Daniel, moving as close as she could, touching his lip with her finger.

"Ummmmmmm, Ummmmmmm. But we have already done it without it." Daniel said

"What are you talking about?" Naomi asked

"Protection. Why do we have to use it now all of a sudden, you are already my wife." Naomi pulled her head off Daniel's chest.

"Not that type of protection, silly!" she said looking him in the eyes, "I'm talking about protection for the baby, we need to baby proof this house!"

STRANGER IN MY BED

*“Love is forever  
Love is fleeting  
Love is kind  
Love is harsh  
Love is ease  
Love is hard  
Love takes time  
Love makes time fly  
Love is fragile  
Love is enduring  
Through forgiveness, we know love  
But without fault, forgiveness ceases  
And when forgiveness ceases, love ceases  
Do not fear the future, nor fear what seems unforgiveable  
Do not condemn imperfections, nor be complacent with them  
Because it is through imperfections and the pursuit of  
righting our wrongs  
That we know happiness, and that we know achievement  
And without the opportunity to attain these feelings, life  
loses meaning  
Remember to always forgive, and always love  
To act without fear of the future, and to be a beacon of  
joy in the world around you  
Because the forgiveness of imperfections is love  
And love is happiness.”*

– Daniel.Pigioli

## *ROMANS 5: 8*

*“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*



## About Penelope

Lawyer, Activist, Feminist ,  
Blogger, Founder- Femme Forte  
Ltd, Solution Architect, Sister,  
Friend, Daughter, Yet to be Wife!  
And now Penelope takes on a  
new Role: writer and author, as  
she offers a brave account of  
prodigious experiences.

**"Ever wonder what life would be like if you made different decisions?  
Ever been broken?**

**Do you wake up thinking, 'how did i end up here?'**

**Do you know what it feels like to be disappointed by the ones you trust?**

**This story is for you!**

**Stranger in my bed is a short story of a man and woman who find hope  
from despair, love from separation, marriage and success out of  
repeated failures despite their own mistakes and those of the people  
they loved. Life is strange, but it seems stranger in Naomi's bed.  
Everyone of us dreams about what we might have been had we made  
different choices, lived different lives. This story will invoke fear,  
anger, anxiety, laughter, memories and at the same time build  
anticipation, excitement and Inspiration."**

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ISBN 978-9970-9744-0-5



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