

# **THE VISIT OF THE RAT**

By

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Elder Amadi made the new pastor some presents. Some tubers of yam, a small bag of garri, some collections of cooking spices tied up in a black polythene bag and a small carton containing fish and some crayfish. Pastor asked Chinedu to keep them in the vestry. That was before the service began.

## Part One

### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **THE VISIT OF THE RAT**

Pastor Zuby mounts his pulpit amid applause from the church. The keyboardist strums on his keys and the drummer makes a classical display and the guitarist joins. This is the kind of reception one would expect in any Pentecostal assembly in the city.

He clears his throat and lifting his voice in a professional accent of a city pastor challenges, “Let somebody in the house shout a big ‘Halleluiah!’”

To this the church thundered, “Halleluiah!”

One cannot say for sure whether it was the noise of the “Halleluiah” that scared the rat from its hiding place; a rat just ran out from somewhere between the pastor’s legs. Could it have been from inside his trousers or that it came from somewhere behind him and ran in between his legs. The movement made pastor jump and of course, the rat in an effort to save its life ran down the altar. When Koza saw it, the shock and fear made her attempt to jump but the chair toppled. She went down with the back of her head. That meant that her legs went up, exposing her underwear. She scampered not knowing whether to struggle to regain her balance or to pull down her short skirt that had by this time rolled up to her hips. Women in the church were jumping and making crackling sounds; the kind they make when they are trying to conceal their fear. Few men saw the rat and attempted to go after it. Those that did not see it made to run and looked out to see the cause of the confusion. The rat took advantage of the confusion and made good its escape.

The church hall thundered in laughter. Pastor made effort to reposition his pulpit that had fallen down in the midst of the confusion. The instrumentalists also tried to reposition themselves. It was a noisy confusion that attracted those in the children church. At the presence of the children, pastor knew he had to take charge of this situation or that will be the end of the service.

“Enough of that!” he thundered out. “Now everybody back to your seat and remember you are in God’s presence”.

People began to reorganize themselves and teachers of the children church led them back to their smaller church. Just then Deaconess Margaret got up from her seat at the back of the congregation and began to advance to the front. Nobody knew what she was up to. Pastor watched to see what she was up to as he was at a loss of words. She walked right to Koza, who was sitting on the very first row of the congregation and stood in front of her, pointing out as one would a recalcitrant intruder,

“Now get up from here and move to the back seat with me,” She commanded.

“What do you mean?” queried Koza. “This is where I want to sit.”

“So you can show our pastor your pant”, Elder Amadi joined the contest uninvited. ‘Must you follow her before I call Chinedu my son to drag you out?’

“I am not going anywhere and your son can not do me anything!”

Deaconess Margaret reached down her hand to drag Koza, just then pastor intervenes.

“Hey, Deaconess, let her be! Koza get up and go to the back; that skirt is really too short. You should have taken the decision yourself after what happened to you just now.”

The whole church thundered out in laughter. It was obvious from the look on pastor’s face that he did not expect his comment to provoke another noisy

session. Margaret marched behind Koza to escort her to the back seat. Even at that Koza refused to sit near Margaret.

“Please, stop all that noise. We are allowing the devil undue advantage this morning,” Pastor scolded.

“Yes, that rat must be a messenger of the devil”, supported Elder Amadi.

“In that case, it must go to hell fire when Jesus comes,” another old man next to Elder Amadi supported.

“So, bad rats go to hell fire and good rats go to heaven. Funny!” Elder Amadi concluded.

This provoked another round of laughter. Even Pastor Zuby could not hold himself from joining them. He managed to regain control before anyone else and then calls them to order.

His message that morning was not clear and everybody knew he kept making reference to the rat issue and indirectly expressing his displeasure for Koza’s short skirt.

Immediately after the service, the worshippers returned to the rat drama, laughing more nosily this time.

Pastor knew that the message his congregation took home is the VISIT OF THE RAT. But where did this rat come from?

## CHAPTER TWO

Jude tried to catch up with Ifunanya, half running, half walking. He knew she was not happy. He did not want to shout her name, most young women do not like to have their names shouted out on the streets. Some miscreants have taken advantage of the information to call the ladies openly hence embarrassing them.

When he was near enough, he called out, “Ifunanya wait for me”

She turned, “I did not know you were trying to reach me”.

“Yes, I know. But I had a ministration in my spirit to see you”

“Over what?” It was clear from her tone that she was not happy, even though she tried to conceal it.

“Over the state of our church, you saw what happened today again”. Jude concentrated his gaze on her face, may be trying to read her mind. Ifunanya dropped her hand by her side and turned off her face as if to say, “I have been trying to forget this”.

‘Sister Ifunanya, being sad does not change anything. We can’t quit at this point. What do we do next?’

She shook her head regretfully. “Jude, I don’t know. I was thinking of changing church”.

“No!” said Jude. “We can’t even afford to think in that direction. No! Ifunanya”.

“So, what do we do? I can’t afford to be watching concert every Sunday morning. I thought that we have gotten over this, but this morning here it is again”.

The Church of the First Born is a Pentecostal assembly with its headquarters in Port Harcourt. Pastor Zuby is the fifth pastor to be posted to this branch at Nuzaba. The pioneer pastor did a very nice job. The General Overseer

organized a gospel crusade in Nuzaba and planted the Nuzaba branch. Elder Amadi and his wife were attending the headquarter church in Port Harcourt. When he retired, he asked the pastor to plant the branch so he and his family can continue to be under the church. The General Overseer consented. Pastor Chris was the first pastor. He was a prayerful young man who burned with passion for God and his service. He prayed and cared for both members and none members. He visited from village to village and house to house. The people around responded by showering him with gifts and care. He married one of the daughters of Nuzaba, Nkiru, and they had their first baby there.

The church that started with Elder Amadi, his wife and three children, grew up to seventy committed members within one year. By the time Chris left they were up to two hundred.

As the Lord worked in the church, Satan also worked to counter the work of God. Some people, who could not have their way under Pastor Chris' spiritual leadership, began to send negative reports to the General Overseer. They accused him of high handedness and greed. They stressed that Pastor could not listen to the elders in the church and pilfered on the church money. Elder Amadi was the ring leader of this people. The truth is that he was feeling that as the human instrument God used to plant the church, the pastors should submit to him. The church was built on his land and he contributed much for the upkeep of the pastors. Pastor Chris thought otherwise. Chris saw himself as the spiritual authority. He stressed that God would hold him accountable for anything bad that happened in the church. He pointed out to them that by bible standard, he, the pastor, was the only human being in the church.

“Remember, it is the shepherd and the sheep. It is not the place of the sheep to give direction to the shepherd.”

Pastor Chris did not only express this but lived it out. On one occasion, he wanted to organize a gospel outreach program to a neighboring village; Elder Amadi said the church cannot do that as there was no money, arguing that they had not finished the building project. Pastor Chris said the building

project can take its time, but that he was not sent to build a house with blocks but to save the souls of men from sin and to build them into a spiritual house in which the Holy Spirit lives.

Elder Amadi disagreed, but Pastor Chris went on with the crusade. That was the outreach that converted Ifunanya- who before then was serving queen of the coast in a fetish shrine as a priestess. At another occasion pastor wanted to buy musical equipment, believing it would help to keep the young people busy in the church. Elder Amadi wanted them to buy them from his nephew at a roadside market, but the price did not go down well with Pastor Chris. He felt that the quality the young man was offering them was not good. He rather bought the instruments from a pastor friend who had gotten something bigger for his church. In spite of the fact that Pastor Chris had made his mind clear, Elder Amadi still told his nephew to bring his own equipment. The Sunday he brought it coincided with the day Pastor Chris brought the one from his pastor friend. Elder sensing what drama was about to play out, hurriedly paid his nephew since he was the church treasurer. He instructed his son to set them up somewhere after the altar. Pastor Chris was still in the vestry. When he came out and saw the equipment, he asked what was happening. Elder Amadi explained to him that, that was the equipment from his nephew.

“But, I told you we cannot have this one”, queried Pastor Chris.

“Sorry, Pastor, we have paid him”, Elder Amadi said in a tone that said he was sorry.

“What do you mean by “we”?” Pastor Chris challenged. “Do you mean you paid him from church account?”

“Yes, pastor” said Elder Amadi, “and the young man has left”.

“That’s okay”, Pastor said sternly, “but just know that you paid him on your account. The musical equipment that the church is buying that has my approval is the one in my office and you have to get money from anywhere you know to pay for it between now and Wednesday”.

And Pastor Chris meant it. Elder Amadi sent delegates to try to sway him but he stuck to his ground. Elder Amadi had to pay for the equipment with his money. Later, he tried to persuade the church to still use the one he got from his nephew, but Pastor Chris refused.

“It is a product of rebellion”, he stated.

That was the trigger that shot the bullet. As Elder Amadi and his group sent negative reports to the General Overseer, a nephew to the General Overseer at this time just came out of the theological seminary and he was thinking of where to send him. He was afraid the young man would not be able to pioneer a work like Pastor Chris. So, with this accusation of Elder Amadi, he recalled Pastor Chris to the headquarter church and posted his nephew to Nuzaba as the new resident pastor.

His name was Okanni.

### CHAPTER 3

Pastor Okanni was fresh from bible school and was also young and handsome. Elder Amadi received him warmly and showered him with gifts. Pastor Okanni was not very comfortable with Elder Amadi's friendship but he had been warned by his General Overseer to try to work in harmony with him. So, he tried his best to avoid controversial areas. He also noticed that many of the church members distanced themselves from him no matter what he did to attract them. Soon the attendance of the church dropped. It was as he made efforts to visit those who were drawing back that some of them told him why Pastor Chris was removed. This displeased Okanni especially when he discovered that both his General Overseer and Elder Amadi had not told him the truth.

He thought this over several days and called on some pastor friends to get their view. All of them said one thing, except one missionary evangelist who had lived in Nuzaba for ten years. They advised him to submit to authority; he should do what his General Overseer told him and work with Elder Amadi. They felt that if Elder Amadi stopped supporting the church, the church would suffer set back, he too will suffer from hunger and his General Overseer will recall him and not post him out again.

"Every authority has been established by God," one of the pastors said. "God knows that Elder Amadi is here, it was he that positioned him in the church to support the church financially. His ministry is to support the church and he is an elder. Remember the bible says that you should treat elders as fathers".

Bro. Kunle, the missionary was of the opinion that Okanni should not join the crowd to do evil. Since he had come to know the truth, he should be bold to communicate it to his General Overseer and stand up to resist the satanic principality which Elder Amadi represented.

"You are a messenger of God", Kunle argued, "not a man of the people. Stand up for the truth. If you do, you will give God a chance to prove himself in your life and ministry. If you don't, God will not take sides with wickedness. He will abandon you here and you will be disgraced. Pastor

Chris may have been withdrawn from the church he suffered to build, but God will reward him. Stand-up for righteousness,” Kunle concluded.

For Pastor Okanni arguments weighed heavily in the favor of supporting the winning side. How could he, in his first posting allow himself to be drawn into a conflict with his uncle who helped him? How will his parents view him? So he ignored Kunle and even stopped interacting with him, because each time they met, Kunle would warn him of the dangers of compromise.

Among those that worshipped with Pastor Okanni are two groups; the Elder Amadi’s group and the reformation group.

Elder Amadi’s group was rich and influential, both with the General Overseer and politically strong in the church. The other group was not that rich and the General Overseer rarely paid attention to their complaints. Pastor Okanni’s view tilted always in support of the Elder Amadi led group.

One morning Pastor Okanni got a text message from his former seminary lecturer that says volumes:

***IF YOU STICK OUT YOUR NECK FOR GOD, GOD WILL STICK OUT HIS NECK FOR YOU- DAN.***

Pastor Okanni called him back to know why he sent him the message. Dan said he had nothing in mind but just had prompting in his spirit to send him the message. Pastor was bordered about this for about a week and then forgot about it.

Elder Amadi’s daughter began to visit him rather too often. In fact, it was she who brought his gifts from her father and mother. She would sit down with him and ask series of questions that Okanni knew were irrelevant and he tried as much as he could to get some answers. One day she brought a pair of boxers and a singlet which she gave to him as his birthday gift. It was that evening as they were sitting together chatting that it began to rain heavily. Nneka then suggested that he tried the boxers on. As he was taking off his clothes in his bedroom to put on the new boxers, Nneka came in and held him from behind. That was it; he slept with Elder Amadi’s daughter.

Afterwards he was really concerned that this may offend her parents and give him a bad name. The girl appeared unruffled and told him to calm down, nothing bad will happen. She stayed until the rain stopped and she went home, though late. Pastor Okanni was really expecting angry visit from her parents, but instead, her mother sent the same girl to send him a wonderfully prepared meal. The treatment on him improved greatly that Okanni cast off every restraint in his dealings with Nneka.

Other girls in the church began to send him gifts too. Some even made bold to send him boxers and singlet. He would tell some of them to wait behind and see him try them on. More than three of them on their own occasion accepted to wait. And what happened between him and Nneka began to spread to about six girls.

One day the parents of one of them invited him to their house. Pastor Okanni was hoping to have a special meal as before. He was shocked to his bones. The girl was pregnant. The parents calmed him down and told him to take steps to control the news if only he was willing to marry their daughter. Out of fright he accepted to, but when he got home, Nneka called to say that she too was pregnant. He promised to marry her too. He said he would see her parents the next day.

Early in the morning the next day, he packed his things and ran away from Nuzaba. As the congregation was asking about the whereabouts of their Pastor, the news went round; six of their daughters were pregnant for the same man. He had only been there eight months.

## CHAPTER 4

It was with shock that the General Overseer received the news of the exploits of Pastor Okanni. He visited the station with his wife and pleaded with the parents of the girls. He wondered why nobody had a sign of what was happening before the six girls became pregnant. The General Overseer was afraid that what happened could cause Elder Amadi to withdraw his support. He pleaded with him until all the parents gave him their words that they will stay with the church.

The Nuzaba branch stayed without a branch pastor for four months. The General Overseer would send one of his pastors at the headquarters to visit on Sundays for the Sunday service. Elder Amadi handled the bible studies with his family. The General Overseer said he was listening to God this time for whom to send. Pastor Chris had left the church to start his own work somewhere and this G.O regretted.

Eventually, he sent Pastor Dandy. Pastor Dandy was married with two children. He felt that this will restrict the kind of thing that happened with Pastor Okanni. The Nuzaba branch organized a reception for him. But Dandy did not stay up to five months. He was too busy running around to feed his children and family. Most weekly activities he was absent. He delegated the duty to Elder Amadi, who was not finding it funny.

One day as he had a heated argument with Pastor Dandy, he openly confessed that the only person he had seen besides the General Overseer who had evidence of genuine calling of God was Pastor Chris.

“Why don’t you just go and do your business, if you know God has not called you”, Elder Amadi scolded Pastor Dandy. “Today, you are at Aba, tomorrow you are at Lagos. Even before those of us who are doing circular business get to the market, you are already returning. Since I have known you, I have not met you praying or reading the bible. What kind of pastor are you?”

Pastor Dandy was really glad to be recalled to the headquarter church.

The General Overseer sent Pastor Zanda. Pastor Zanda had distinction in hermeneutics and church history. His first day in church was the starting of what is known now as the drama session. In his message he was trying to trace the history of the Acts of the Apostles to the church. He told them who the author was and that he was the same person that wrote the gospel of Luke. After the whole talk he crowned it with a big mistake.

“Now I have come to the end of my extra-polation. Anybody has any question?” He proposed.

It was mama Ikenna that stood up. She is an old petty trader at the village market. Surprisingly enough she understands English and knows how to read the bible.

“Pastor!” She started, “thank you for your wonderful what-ever-you called it. But what concerns us with that entire story? How does that concern me if Luke was a medical doctor that was a gentile? Whether he married or not, does not have anything to do with this town of Nuzaba and a church that has a record of killing pastors, that is, if the pastor does not kill them first? What is the relevance of this teaching to us?”

Pastor Zanda stood stunned for close to five minutes and Chinedu, Elder Amadi’s son shouted out, “Pastor, answer her now. Are you not the one that asked for questions?”

At this the whole church roared out into laughter. Since then every Sunday service, something happened that made people laugh. The sad side of it is that the laughter will actually drown whatever the message that was preached that day. Elders complained to the G.O and he too was withdrawn. Pastor Zuby replaced him.

## CHAPTER 5

When Pastor Zuby came, he was warmly received by both factions in the church because he had some similarities to Pastor Chris. This is because Elder Amadi had begun to regret the part he played in sending Pastor Chris away. He went to the General Overseer to ask him to send him back. It was then he was told that he had left the ministry.

They organized a reception for pastor Zuby and the two factions reconciled for his sake. It was on his fourth Sunday that the rat visited the church. The previous Sunday witnessed laughter but not in the usual way. They laughed rather at the foolish things they did to frustrate their church.

The message was taken from Haggai, chapter one, verse seven, captioned, “Consider your ways?” The Holy Spirit used Pastor Zuby to call the church to order. Everybody was hoping that this Sunday would be better. It was in the state of this high spirits that Elder Amadi sent the gifts this morning. It had been long he sent gifts to the pastors. If he did, it was out of a sense of duty, not love or Christian commitment.

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Pastor entered his bedroom and shut the door behind him. He pondered in his mind what it was that happened today. He knew that a strange spirit entered the church this morning. He had heard about this church. His General Overseer had called him a month before his posting to brief him on what happened here. He in return had fasted for twenty-one days, six-to-six. He had prayed to take charge of the territory. He was on that fast when he arrived in Nuzaba. It is not that he was expecting to find his job easy but the way things happened this morning swept him off his feet.

Just then his GSM phone rang. He looked at the screen for the caller, it was his General Overseer. He refused to pick the call. He was afraid of lying. He knew he would ask about the service and he cannot afford to tell him all went well. The General Overseer tried two more times and stopped.

A light tap on the door and his younger brother Jude opened the door, “Elder Amadi says he must see you now”.

He wondered what would be the reason the old man wants to see him urgently. If not for the urgency, he did not want to see anybody now. He got up sluggishly and followed Jude to the parlor.

“Pastor, good afternoon,” the Elder greeted standing on his feet.

“Good afternoon sir, please sit down,” he responded. ”Is everything okay?”

“Pastor, I feel the need to make a confession”.

“Confession?”

“Yes, I know what I mean”.

“Then, go ahead”.

Pastor sat down too.

“You see, I was the human instrument that brought this branch of the church to Nuzaba. I repented under this church and was ordained under this church as an elder. I resolved to serve God with my resources. But I did not know how to put a divide between my pride and God’s work. The first pastor that came here was a real child of God who served God with all his strength?”

At this point Elder Amadi broke down and began to cry.

“No, Elder, whatever it is, finish your story?” Pastor consoled. “The Bible says that if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive. The fact that you ever came to confess, has guaranteed your forgiveness, let me hear you”.

Elder Amadi recomposed himself and continued. “My pride that God used me to open the church here would not let me allow the young man to do his job. I began to resist him and broke the church into factions. It was my pressure that made the General Overseer to redeploy him. Since then I have watched to see the devil mess with this church, because Pastor Chris did not choose my daughter as wife and I was not happy with him. When another

Pastor came we planted our daughter on him. In the process, to my shame, the girl is carrying an illegitimate baby now. Pastors that came here broke my heart and I now know that Pastor Chris is the real child of God.

“When you came, our spirits were high; I was willing to give up my pride to allow the church be what God wants it to be. But this morning, it became clear; there is a spiritual angle to this matter.

“I heard a voice telling me to confess my sins if I want the church to be revived. That is why I came here”. He broke down again and began to weep.

Pastor consoled Elder Amadi, “Truly you did not do well, but I want to let you know that God has sent you here for me to reassure you he has forgiven you. My worry is where that rat came from?”

Elder wiped his eyes, “And why did the church scatter for the sake of a rat? Is it that none of us have seen a rat before?”

“I believe God wanted us to see that something is wrong,” Pastor Zuby said thoughtfully. “And that rat came from the altar”.

The two men sat still pondering.

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Who will tell Elder Amadi that the rat that scattered our church came from his little basket of love gift to our new pastor? Innocent he was, yet grossly guilty. Who will tell him though sincere he was, but his pain is self inflicted? If we wish to do the work of God we must do it by the strength that God gives and in the order he prescribes. Apostle Paul indicted the church in Corinth that their meetings caused more harm than good because the spirit of oneness which is a compulsory requisite for a Holy Spirit attended fellowship was not there- there was disunity (1 Cor. 11:17-19). We cannot properly stress the level of damage that Satan can inflict on a gathering of believers where the Holy Spirit has been edged out by the ego of men. Somebody said that EGO can mean two different things for two categories of people: Exalt God Only (EGO) or Edge God Out (EGO).

It is like the EGO of Elder Amadi edged God out.

It is not out of place to say that in the same way that the rat gained access to the church through his gifts, so the demons gained entrance to the church through his generous support of the church. He meant well but did not watch his heart.

The result is the pain in his heart. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the pain was there because he was a genuine child of God. Hence his effort to undo whatever he had done wrong, not minding what it would cost him. Most people would not; or if they dared, they will make what happened seem trivial. So the wound worsens, spreads rapidly and eventually damns his soul in Hell Fire, that reward zone for the disobedient and ungodly. He will not be there because God never cared, but because he refused to heed the pleading of the Holy Spirit the same way Elder Amadi did and rescued his soul. Oh!, that the person for whom the Lord sends this warning will read now and hurry, yes, hurry before the one who goes about like a roaring lion grabs and drags him to the region of no-return - the region where Judas Iscariot found himself and burst open.

Elder Amadi wondered why a mere rat could scatter a gathering of matured adults. Does it not happen everywhere every day? Little challenges offset a whole gathering and new converts fall back into the world. Then people like Deaconess Margret try to restore order by physical force. It never works, and will never work.

If anybody sees Pastor Okanni, please tell him that friendship with the world is enmity towards God. Tell him that the founder of this faith says that when we choose father, mother, uncle, wife, brother or any earthly relationship in the face of Christ, we immediately lose our relevance to this commission. That one may be answering Pastor, Prophet or any such titles that men may confer on him; heaven counts him unqualified though men may give him an office to fill-in. What happened to Pastor Okanni shall eventual befall him sooner or later - disgrace, utter disgrace.

If you meet Pastor Dandy first, it will not be out of place to give him the same message, but also add that this business is not a trivial one. God so

valued the souls of men that he had to give up his only begotten Son for our sake. Before embracing this calling one ought to count the cost. Those who went out before us and made any impact are those whom the Lord says has set their heart on pilgrimage (Ps84), and as such must be willing to live as the birds of the air. But this will not be possible if you never heard anything in the first place before you went. Psalm119:49-50 gives a hint. You will need the words that God spoke to you as you journey. If you heard nothing, you will not have reply for those who will want to know who made you a judge and ruler over Israel. This message is coded and only those for whom the Lord sends it will understand it. But if the Lord has not said anything to you, I mean to you personally, not through a prophet or mentor, then, withdraw.

Elder Amadi may not be a pastor but he knows what a pastor should look like. We apologize in regards of the rudeness of the Elder at Nuzaba church, but may this provoke you to do a soul search.

For Pastor Zanda, it is not in the mind of God that anyone, no matter how intelligent and eloquent, should try to do the work in the power of the flesh. Let him return to the Acts of Apostles of which he prides himself and then learn that Jesus did not permit those he trained in his own bible school to go out to do this work unless they received an infilling by the Holy Spirit. He that did not choose from the hungry multitude men to help him do the work, yet praying the Father to do the sending; he will not endorse men sent by the excesses of intellectual strength. It is not wrong for Pastor Zanda to pursue theological training, but let him understand that it will not do. Mama Ikenna maybe illiterate in the sense of this world, yet, the Spirit in her will guide her, and protect her from the theological demons that Pastor Zanda and his likes parade.

There are some who consider anywhere people gather to be a church, for these the most important thing is to keep people together. To this category the General Overseer belongs. Hence we see all manner of ICHABODIC (please bear with my invention from the word Ichabod) altars all over the land. Dribbling and deceit are hereby considered basic wisdom keys in ministry, the pulpit is an inheritance to be handed to children and could be

used to advertise our benevolence to friends and kinsmen. Let those practicing such know from today that GOD IS NOT AS CONFUSED AS THEY ARE. He has his idea of what HE calls a church, those doing otherwise are on their own.

We do not wish to insult the Lord's anointed, that is if we do not wish that our apology to Pastor Zanda and Pastor Dandy be considered mere lip service, but let the G.O know that he is part of the problem of the Church at Nuzaba. Financial support should not be able to darken his sense of judgment.

Before we go on, let my reader bow down quietly in prayer, asking the great teacher, the Holy Spirit to bring us into these matters, yes the total truth in these matters. Let us pray that HE will not permit us to go any further until he has convicted us of every sin, for it is He that we trust to deliver us from condemnation;

Holy Spirit, at this point we need you desperately.

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## Part 2

### CHAPTER 6

It is now one year since Pastor Zuby came to Nuzaba. The laughing drama stopped abruptly. The message of Pastor Zuby got better every week. One day pastor laid hands on Koza in a prayer session and she manifested a demon. After about five minutes of struggling with her the demon was exorcised. The church began to notice the presence of the Holy Spirit more.

It was in this state of things that Pastor began to hear rumors that Brother Jude and Sister Ifunanaya were passing nights together in the church auditorium. To make it worse, they do that on Saturday night and runaway about 4.30am Sunday morning.

He didn't know how to go about this, especially as Jude being not only his younger brother, but is always the one that will encourage him to continue to pray. Ifunanya was the one that changed the choir and the youths. She even organized a retreat for them. Since then the youth of the church have not been the same.

The Holy Spirit has not sent him any signal to intimate him about such an act. He does not know whether the accused persons have heard this rumor. If they have, they never showed it by any way.

One evening, Deaconess Margaret, who is known for her courage in correcting people came to his house and asked to see him privately. He knew that the purpose of her visit cannot be far from that issue. And he was right.

“Pastor,” she started. “I came to ask you, even though some people said they have told you. Have you not heard that your brother Jude and Ifunanya have been defiling our church every Sunday morning before service? They come to the church and sleep and then hurry away. Then during Sunday service they will begin to speak in tongues”.

Pastor took time to listen to her while waiting to see if God will tell him anything. When she had finished and he knew she had nothing else to say he said,

“You know Sister Margaret, such allegations should not be rushed into, especially because of the caliber of persons concerned”.

“What do you mean by the caliber of persons?” Deaconess interrupted, “Is it because Jude is your brother and Ifunanya...”

“Do not be in a haste Margaret”, Pastor cut her short. “The bible said we should not entertain an accusation against an elder without first investigating it.”

“Is Jude an elder? Is Ifunanya an elder?”

“Yes, they are; elder does not have to do with their age but their spiritual maturity. By their spiritual maturity, they are elders”.

“So, when will you investigate this matter against your elders?”

“Let me take my time”.

At this she left. Pastor Zubu kept wondering how to go about this. He knows that all eyes were on him.

## CHAPTER 7

Pastor has made up his mind to investigate this allegation. For some weeks the spiritual atmosphere has improved. There is more love among the members. On his part as the pastor he has noticed the anointing presence of the Holy Spirit. As he stands behind the pulpit to preach, there is this awareness of God in the house; at one occasion he noticed a warm touch of the Holy Spirit on his head. He had never felt this way before; then he preached such a lively message. The church was aflame with the Holy Spirit power, people prayed and sang with liberty, the songs he raised provoked tears in the eyes of the worshippers.

Now Pastor Zuby can say that God is in his church. But two things kept pestering his mind, and this is because people kept making reference to them. One is the matter of the visit of the rat on that memorable Sunday morning. In fact, Elder Amadi, while rounding up prayers one morning openly asked God to show them where that rat is hiding, so that they will kill it once and for all, lest it visits again. The manner with which the church chorused “Amen”, made him see that for the members of the Nuzaba congregation that matter was far from being over.

The second thing is that which he had decided to investigate. Could it be true that his younger brother will choose the church auditorium of all the places in the world to sleep with Sister Ifunanya? If it is true, why on Sunday morning, two hours before Sunday service?

Though resolved to investigate, he had feelings that the Holy Spirit wanted him to know something. He was sure that he will know more than he wants to see.

He had passed Jude an hour ago studying the bible in the parlor and in his characteristic manner he was mumbling prayers and shaking his head as if the message he was getting from the passage would not allow him keep his head at a place.

That was why his mother told him to take Jude along. She was of the opinion that since he was not married and Christ sent his disciples two by

two. Jude will be of great spiritual assistance to him. And Jude has done that too well. There are occasions he was too fagged out to pray, but hearing Jude shout out, “Yes, Lord!” from the parlor, he stood up to pray; hearing him made Pastor Zuby feel that God was actually saying something to him. After the visit of the rat, it was Jude that warned him that this congregation was under demonic manipulation and encouraged him to persist in prayers. He was part of the preparatory fasting and prayer they did before they came here. It is true he had on one occasion pointed out Ifunanya as a girl who had genuine salvation and carried the presence of the Holy Spirit, but that was all. He never did anything that betrayed that he lusted after her.

“Jude!” Pastor Zuby called out. He knows Jude hates to be interrupted when he is meditating.

The door opened gently, “You called?”

“Yes”, Zuby said as he wrung his hands as one who was tired and needed to rest. “You know this is Saturday and almost evening. Do not let anybody disturb me for whatever reason. Even you should not come for anything till I appear tomorrow morning. Do not try my number because my phone may be off. If I need you I will call you. Okay?”

The surprise was written all over Jude’s face. He nodded in an expression that says, “What do I have to lose?”

And then went back to his prayers.

Zuby nodded. Plan A accomplished. He had collected some fruits, biscuits and beverages which he loaded in his little fridge. Plan B may be a bit more demanding so he lay down to sleep.

The alarm of his clock startled him up 1am Sunday morning. He took some water and washed his face and then changed into a T-shirt and jean trousers. The church auditorium is about one hundred meters from his residence. Once in a while he had gone there in the midnight but always in Jude’s company. This is the first time he will do it alone. Just then a nocturnal bird made a sound that seemed to say, “We are waiting for you out here” so out

he went through the back door, taking his time not to make any sound that will betray his movement.

The cool Harmattan breeze received him with little friendliness. Then he remembered he should have had something thicker to shield the cold, but he resolved not to go back. He remembered once how he and Jude had saved a young pastor who attempted suicide at this time of the night. He was the one that noticed the movement and followed, tiptoeing to the tree where he was going to hang himself. He had called to Jude who ran to help him bring the young pastor down. The pastor felt he had made a mistake by entering the ministry and God was not keeping his promises. The suicide attempter is now heading a church somewhere in Abuja. After seeing that night the protruding tongue the bulging eyes and the strangling rope, Zuby had decided that if he will die, it will not be by hanging.

Arriving at the church premises, he had to decide on where to hide to wait for Jude and Ifunanya. Despite the harmattan cold, he had prepared his mind for the long wait.

## CHAPTER 8

By 8pm church members have begun to gather in Pastor Zuby's residence. The members could not hold back the shock. "How can pastor make such a reckless statement?" was the question on every lip. Jude had walked up to him after service and screamed out loud

"Are you going mad or something?"

To this Pastor Zuby calmly replied concentrating his gaze on his face

"Forgive me but I wish I could,"

Jude stormed back. "What will the General Overseer say when he hears this? What will our parents say? What will people.....?"

"Say about what?" Pastor Zuby kept his cool. "Come Jude, if you don't have something to think about I have a lot. Why don't you allow me some space?"

"Sure, you do!" He walked away shaking his head as he usually did when in the mood of prayer.

At least five times before this Saturday night, he had repeatedly pleaded with him to throw away that idea.

'Please, Zuby please! This idea is from the devil'.

"We will see at the end" Pastor Zuby had resolved from the onset not to engage Jude in any conflict because he understood how he felt. But there is no way he can let him into this plan as that will be counterproductive. For his own sake, Pastor Zuby had to keep the secret. If Jude knew, the people would not encounter the truth, the way he, Pastor Zuby encountered it.

Elder Amadi had invited him at the mid week to his house, and alongside his wife pleaded with him to see reasons and not destroy his labor of the past few months by one act of carelessness. He explained to the elder and his family that there was nothing to fear.

Some of them had gone to see the General Overseer. They were not asking him to remove Pastor Zuby but he should prevail on him to jettison this “devilish idea”.

Pastor Zuby had expected that, so had visited the General Overseer before even he made the announcement. He had briefed him on his findings in the Nuzaba branch and how he intended to give a permanent cure to the spiritual issues in the church. The General Overseer gave his blessings and promised to keep the secret.

Elder Amadi was about the last person that entered with his son Chinedu. He used a staff not because his body cannot carry him but as a style. He went and sat in a solitary corner of the parlor. Not all the members came. Some people like Deaconess Margaret refused to come.

“Of what use will the sight be to me?” she had reasoned.

When all had sat down and the place was as dead as a cemetery, Pastor Zuby stood and shouted, “Praise the Lord!”

There was no lively response.

“Well, I know that change is difficult. Otherwise, why is it that my members will not honor my invitation? If I wish to teach something they don’t believe in why not hear me out. Imagine my own brother Jude is not here, Ifunanya is not here. Well, you that are here are welcome”.

There was no response.

“Remember, I told you I have a direction from God himself to legalize fornication and adultery in this church. He told me that if we do, it will make our church grow. And on the very day we do, we will see that rat we have been looking for and will be able to kill it. My girlfriend is in the room upstairs resting. When we are ready, I will call her down here and will fulfill my promise to have sex with her before you all”.

“Abomination!” Nobody was sure who said that, but Pastor Zuby felt it could be Elder Amadi.

“So,” Pastor continues, ignoring the remark. “Just relax and we will be with you very soon. God bless you!” He bowed and went away.

Nobody made any comment. Most of them resolved to leave this church.

“But to where?” was their problem. Church of the First Born was the only living church around. Since that church came the sub-urban community of Nuzaba had experienced a great degree of spiritual uplifting. At least two beer parlors have been shut down. A number of lives have been touched by the power of God. Besides Elder Amadi and Pastor Zuby and his brother Jude, all other members were converted by the Nubaza branch. The devil has tried through many methods to close down the church, but failed. The strongest blow was the power tussle between Elder Amadi and Pastor Chris. When Elder Amadi humbled himself and repented everything began to move on well. Pastor Zuby did much to bring revival to the church through his fervent prayer life, sound interpretation of the Word of God and his humility. He was a father to the core. He finds it easy to forgive and will bear with those who do not understand, hoping that they grow and understand later. That is exactly what he is doing now. It is just that the matter in question is a serious one. How could anybody want to come to terms with the issue that Pastor did not only legalize fornication and adultery, but that he wants to have sex with his girlfriend in the presence of the members?

With the thought bordering their mind some fell asleep. Some were hoping that pastor will just come out and say he was only joking. But he has been on this rather too long. This is a joke gone too far. This may be worse than the visit of the rat.

It was 2 am that pastor came and stirred up the sleeping crowd.

“You see, the time has come”, he started

The excitement was electric; some were wiping their eyes with the back of their hands. Elder Amadi was still in the same position he was. He never really slept but his mind was blank. He did not know what to think. He had prayed about this and handed it over to God. He pointed out to God that his

years were far spent. He only prayed that God should not let this church die before his death.

“Now hear the rules”

“Rules?” It was Koza

“Now Koza, don’t interrupt me again”.

“Okay pastor”, she withdrew into her silence.

“We are going somewhere now”, Pastor Zuby continues. “But nobody else must notice our movement. As silent as cats”.

“Thank God you did not say rats”, Elder Amadi interjected.

Some people tried to laugh but muffled the laughter before it took over them.

“Elder Amadi, please, for once, we must be careful, so that we do not miss what we are up to”.

“We are going to the church now”.

“Pastor Zuby, I will not be part of that”, Elder Amadi stood up. “You cannot do that your rubbish in the place we worship God. Hear me?”

“I promise you, I won’t. But please, you have come thus far. Try to cooperate with me”.

Pastor managed to take control of the occasion and soon they all were heading to the church, the same way he went there alone that night.

He had given details to them in his house, so everybody knew what is expected of them. They took their position around the church building, yet not knowing what to expect. The weather was friendlier than the day Pastor Zuby came alone, perhaps because of their number.

## CHAPTER 9

It was exactly 3am when those in hiding noticed two figures in the distant darkness approaching the church building. Pastor had warned that the slightest noise will thwart their mission. Chinedu had to stay back in pastor's house because he had a cough. As the figures drew near, those who knew them could now recognize them.

Jude and Ifunanya came into the dark church auditorium with a torch. From the way she busted out crying it was obvious she had been crying even before she got here. Jude fell on the floor and began to wail like a new widow.

“Lord”, Jude cried, “How can you do this to us? It was only last week we thanked you for bringing revival to our church. You were the one that asked us to start this prayer, that you will use it to send a revival for prayer in our church. What is happening now? Pastor Zuby have gathered our members in his house to teach them how to commit fornication and adultery”.

His voice rang through the darkness even when he was trying to hold back.

“Jesus!” Ifunanya prayed, “Why not just kill me? Since I repented in this church you have not given my soul peace. From one trouble to another, now this one! Father, do something to stop this abomination!”

They carried on with the prayer and something around 4.30am they left. The burden in their hearts did not allow them take notice of the other persons under cover.

Pastor was the first to stand up and quietly invited the hiding flock into the auditorium.

‘You can now see the fornication and adultery I am talking about. This is the fornication and adultery Ifunanya and Jude had been doing for some months now.

“Next week we all will be here before them to fornicate here. Now quietly go home and return for Sunday service”.

Ifunanya had been the one that had stoically borne the stigma of an unclean person. One cannot say for sure if it offended her or that she did not notice it. But this morning, she was overwhelmed with surprise that even deaconess Margaret came to embrace her and asked after her parents and welfare. Elder Amadi brought her a packet of fruit juice- the size and kind he gave only to Pastor Zuby. She did not know how to respond to all the kind gestures she was getting from the members of the church. When it was praises and worship time, she noticed how almost everybody wanted to dance with Jude.

“Strange!” Ifunanya thought to herself. One thing was undeniable; the presence of the Holy Spirit. “Did the fornication and adultery the pastor legalized take place? Did it please God so much that he came in such an apparent manifestation to give his approval for it?” This bordered Ifunanya as she sipped from the packet of fruit juice as she walked home after service.

## CHAPTER 10

Ifunanya walked hurriedly to the place she was supposed to meet Jude. The agreement was that he should flash her number anytime he arrived there. Ordinarily she should be afraid to walk in the darkness but Jude had given her a bible passage that dealt with that fear when they started seven months ago.

“Even though I walk through the valley of shadow of death, I will fear no evil,” he had reminded her also adding, “Where shall I hide from your presence, oh Lord... Even in the darkness, the darkness is as light before you”.

Initially she feared that Jude, being a handsome young man could be a temptation, but her fears were assailed as she saw that Jude was a Christian with one focus- to please God. He was the one that called out the prayer points. His idea was that on Sundays and every other service days, they should observe the goings on in the church and any other strange happenings, when they came to pray they should mention them before God in prayer; hence the negative attitude of the members only meant a prayer topic to them.

“We are to watch and pray” he said. “We will watch out for things we want God to do or correct and then pray about it. We are not supposed to join people in complaining and grumbling since we know that most negative traits in the church are the activities of demons and messengers of darkness”.

After the first two meetings, they had reasons to thank God for definite changes in the church. Pastor Zuby’s preaching became more lively. Laughter during messages and choir ministration reduced. Fracas and bickering in the church became minimal. In fact, one Sunday, instead of praying, they just sang praises and worship and went home to prepare for Sunday service. That was the Sunday that the rat visited the church. Ifunanya had felt shattered, just when she felt the battle had ended. It took Jude to help her recollect her pieces and continue the prayers, now resolving to persist in prayers whether testimony or not.

It was in the midst of this persistent aggression that Pastor Zuby resolved to legalize fornication and adultery. Other cases never disturbed Jude, but this one ruffled him. He even threatened to fight Pastor Zuby if he did not openly withdraw his statements.

“Remember, our weapons are not carnal- we don’t fight with human weapons.” she had reminded him. “We cannot mess up all we have labored for at this point. We must continue to pray”.

Jude was swayed, and so they prayed. The both of them were shocked at the atmosphere in church last Sunday and the weekly activities. People seemed happier and prayed more. There was this aura of warm fellowship among the members that Jude began to suspect that pastor would not have carried out his plan. Jude claimed he had asked him.

“I will reply you next Sunday”, was his reply.

So, the Sunday had come and they were going back to report what they observed and to pray, half confused, half happy.

“Ah-ah! You didn’t see me?” Ifunanya was startled when she heard Jude’s voice and noticed she was walking past him.

“Sorry-o, my mind was too busy”, she apologized. “Good morning”

“God bless you,” Jude replied. “Let us go but I have a feeling we are about getting a surprise. My brother did what he did again last Sunday. He ate early and said that I should not enter his room for whatever reason until I see him in church”.

“Look out there, Jude”, Ifunanya called out ignoring his gossip.

“I told you we are in for surprise, let’s move on”.

Unlike what they had known, the church generator was on. At other occasions they had relied on Jude’s torch light. As they got closer, they were noticing human figures and hearing voices from the church. For curiosity sake they carried on. When they got to the door, they were surprised to see

even Pastor Zuby and Elder Amadi in the midst of many church members standing and making all manners of prayers.

“Come in my good children”, Elder Amadi added.

“Were they dreaming?” the two wondered. Even Koza, Chinedu and Mama Priscilla.

“What is happening here?” Jude queried.

“You are the one to answer the question?” Elder Kenneth responded. “You did not want us to know you were coming here to pray. We all began to carry our gossip, to which you never responded. God has answered your prayers. God has healed our church”.

“Yes!” added Deaconess Margaret, “Our church will never be the same again!”

Overwhelmed with excitement and joy, Ifunanya broke out in song and all joined in thunderous praise to God.

Pastor had to force them to stop by 6 am, so that they can go and prepare for the Sunday service.

## **Chapter 11**

Revival, sweet revival! The members of the church of the Firstborn discovered how eager God was to respond to the call of his people.

We should stop blaming the devil for the negative things that happen in our churches; he is only running his ministry. Every praying church with a spirit filled pastor is a threat to the devil and his kingdom. Try to imagine the damage the congregation at Nuzaba had done to the darkness in that region. Ifunanya was serving the devil, but now serves Jesus. God used her to give spiritual direction to the youths. Beer parlors that serve Satan in attacking families and spreading delinquency and immorality have been shutdown. If the church is the light of the world, it is understandable that the prince of darkness should have major interest in such assembly.

This is not our concern. Our concern is how can a living congregation like the one at Nuzaba keep off the darkness and continue to fulfill her mandate. That brings us to the question of the rat that came from behind the altar and ran through between the legs of the pastor and pushed down his pulpit.

So on this particular Sunday, the congregation at Nuzaba was in high spirits as they laughed over one of Elder Amadi's jokes. Pastor Zuby was leaning on a pillar. Deaconess Margret was discussing with Mama Priscilla and every other person had their hand on one thing or the other. Then Deaconess Margret cried out, "Here it comes again!"

Nobody asked "What?" or "Who?" Elder Amadi aimed his staff at it, but that was only able to cut off its tail. Pastor Zuby aimed his bible; it struck it but not enough to immobilize it. Then Koza and Chinedu chased it around for a while. Then the shout of, "We bind you in Jesus Name!" rang through the church auditorium. Others joined with, "Holy Ghost Fire!"

It got confused as it tried to find a way of escape, just then a youth hit it hard and it could not run anymore. Everybody took turns in hitting it; finally it lay lifeless in the center of the church.

The rat that had messed up the congregation at Nuzaba is conquered; the rat that made a mockery of the ministry of Pastor Zuby and filled the eyes of our elders with tears, exposing the nakedness of our daughters; lies slain. They were all sweating and panting; amidst pounding heart beats a strange silence engulfed the hall as they gazed at this “little fox” that ruined the vineyard. Nobody knew what the other was thinking, but they all can see that no enemy will be too hard for a united church to conquer.

Brother Jude lifted his voice,

*Jesus conquered the world and gave us victory*

*Victory! Victory!!*

*Halleluiah!*

Everybody joined and danced, and celebrated.

.....  
.....

## **Epilogue**

The congregation at Nuzaba followed Jude out to the waiting car like mourners, many eyes enshrouded with tears.

“Lord, your will be done.” Elder Amadi said under his breath as he held onto Jude’s arm like a little child.

Jude had shocked the church with the news that the Lord had instructed him to head for the Bible College. In the life of Jude the flock at Nuzaba has been learning how to walk in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

He had first shocked Pastor Zuby that he was convinced that God was preparing a wife for him in sister Ifunanya. It is true that Pastor Zuby had received a revelation that Ifunanya was to be his wife. But he was afraid to even mention it; for fear that Jude may be offended. He thought Jude had some kind of emotional attachment to her. So it was shocking when Jude called his attention one morning.

“Pastor Zuby, what are you thinking about marriage?”

“Why? Why are you asking?” Pastor Zuby queried.

“You need a wife now because the Lord has made it clear to me I should head for Bible school. You are still young and working alone here can be challenging to you and even the young women around”.

Pastor Zuby was quiet as if he was pondering about his comment. He was actually afraid for the way the discussion was going. How will he tell Jude the Lord is leading him to marry Ifunanya?

“Well I am hearing from you for the first time you are going for theological training. I know I should be thinking of marriage but I don’t know where to start”.

“I know what your problem is really. You have always believed I have more than sister-brother attachment to Ifunanya. I am telling you that there is nothing like that. From the day I learnt that God wants me in the ministry, I surrendered all my will to him. I resolved that I will only do what he wants

me to do. And he has been faithful by giving the guidance I need. I have never made mistakes because he will always tell me what to do. He told me that Ifunanya is your wife, and I was preparing her for you.”

Pastor Zuby was shocked. “Jude, please pray for me, please pray for me that I may learn to walk with God the way you do’, he broke down on his knees weeping, pleading with the One that called him to grant him grace to be close to him just as his younger brother is.

“Help me! Lord, Help me!”

Brother Jude also showed his surrendered will to God when he distanced himself from pursuit for elective offices. The revival in the church meant increase in membership and more units of the church set-up. Jude said he was contented with his personal intercession for the church. The church had to plead with him to head the prayer squad of the church. He became a rallying point to both youths and adults. He prayed with and for them. Visited and encouraged all. He never made efforts to get honor or reward. It was in this atmosphere that Pastor Zuby announced that God was leading him to advance his studies. When the members heard that it was the Lord leading him, they knew it was settled. The church in Nuzaba has learnt of late to allow the Holy Spirit guide their every decision. It became a common thing that when one suggested to another something he would want to be done, the other will say, “Have you prayed about this?” or “Are you sure the Lord is leading you into this?”

So now the church knew God was asking them to release Jude, and in obedience they are doing it, even though they feel the pain. Like Elder Amadi, they are all saying, “Your will be done”.

Lord, THY WILL BE DONE IN EVERY CONGREGATION

## **About the Author—**

The author is the founding president of Prayer Network for Universal Revival (PNUR), a Christian ministry praying and working for revival in today's church. God has used him in bringing salvation, Deliverance and revival to many across the globe. He has authored among others, *PASTOR LUKAS' CHURCH- Story of the pastor who visited Hellfire, Confronting Witchcraft in the Neighborhood, The Right Ways to Fast and Pray, How to be Delivered and Remain Delivered, The Nazirite; God's Response to Decay and Complacency, Who Told You that You are Naked?*

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