

TWO BROKEN HEARTS MEET



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CAST

CATHERINE

VERA

STAN

MADAM PASCALINE

LEONARD

CHRISTY

MAN

WOMAN

DAYA

EXTRA

The play takes place over three years in various locations in Bamenda, Cameroon.

MIF stands for Mutual Investment Fund.

SCENE 1

At the backyard of a residence. Around 5:00 p.m.

CATHERINE, mid-twenties, sits on the lawn, tears flowing from her pale face.

A few minutes later, **VERA**, twenty-something, joins her.

VERA: Please, come in and eat something.

CATHERINE: I'm not hungry.

VERA: Cathy, you can't continue refusing to eat. You might faint.

CATHERINE: You trust someone with all your heart, and they break it without a thought as to how you'll cope.

VERA: Gerald doesn't deserve your tears. The one that will stay will come.

CATHERINE: When, Vera? I'm 26. I turned down non-Christian men because I wanted a Christian, but what is my reward? A broken heart!

A little breeze blows.

CATHERINE: Why would Gerald walk away? He just walked away! Didn't even collect the engagement ring.

VERA: Stop tormenting yourself. A broken engagement is better than a broken marriage.

CATHERINE: Was he double dating? Or did God tell him I wasn't the right one? Or is it something I did unknowingly that sent him away? I need answers.

Vera cuddles Catherine and lets her sob out the bitterness.

SCENE 2

Inside Mutual Investment Fund branch, Bamenda. 8 a.m.

A staff of about eight sits around a table.

OFFICIAL: Good morning, everyone. I'm here to introduce your new branch manager, Mr. Ngu Stan, coming from our main office in Douala. He'll be fully installed in the coming days.

Mr. Ngu, you are welcome to Bamenda.

STAN: Thank you, sir.

OFFICIAL: I'll call on everyone present to introduce yourselves so Mr. Ngu can get to know you better.

VERA: I'm Vera Ngam, marketing.

MADAM PASCALINE: Ako Pascaline, teller

The scene fades out as the others introduce themselves.

SCENE 3

Catherine's Bedroom. Night.

Catherine is lying on her bed. Vera comes in with a plate of food on a tray.

VERA: Food is ready.

CATHERINE: I don't (--)

VERA: No, no, no. I won't stand by and watch you starve to death 'cause of a guy. Get up for me.

Catherine sits up, and Vera places the tray on her laps.

Catherine just stares at the plate. Vera takes the spoon and feeds her.

CATHERINE: I appreciate you coming over to spend the night here. I don't sleep well.

VERA: I want to see you move on.

Vera selects Sinach's I KNOW WHO I AM on the mp3 player.

VERA: After you finish eating, we'll pray. Is that okay?

CATHERINE: I'm not hungry. (*Lies down.*)

Vera takes Catherine up to a sitting position.

VERA: Take. (*Brings a spoonful to her mouth.*)

SCENES 4-5

Stan's living room. Same night.

Stan is sitting at a table, arms folded, staring into space. A plate of food is on the table.

Some offensive words keep ringing in his head:

VOICE: Stan, I no longer want this relationship. I don't love you anymore.

His stare transforms into a flashback in another living room. He's seated beside

CHRISTY, a twenty-two-year-old, lovely dove.

STAN (*sobbing*): Christy, don't do this to me. Consider how far we've come. Consider what we've both put into this relationship.

Silence.

STAN: I can't live without you, my love.

He goes down on his knees and takes her hands.

Christy withdraws her hands and looks away.

STAN: Christy, what do I tell my mom and dad? What do I tell my friends? Why are you doing this? Why!?

CHRISTY: Stan, I no longer want this relationship. I don't love you anymore.

End of flashback.

Stan takes a spoonful of meal to his mouth, hesitates, and drops it on the plate. He bows his head.

A few minutes later, Christy comes out of the kitchen with her own plate of food.

CHRISTY: You haven't even touched your food?

STAN: I was waiting for you.

CHRISTY: Awww, that's so romantic of you, babe. Have you seen the tailor already?

STAN: Yes, he told me I should collect the suit tomorrow.

CHRISTY: Wow. Everything is moving so fast.

STAN: You don't like it?

CHRISTY: You know I do. What could be better than being your wife?

Stan wants to kiss her, but the doorbell buzzes.

CHRISTY: Sorry, you attend to them.

Stan gets up, and then... it was all a dream. He is standing before that table, the plate of food, now very cold, is still right there in front of him.

The alarm clock is buzzing from the bedroom, signaling 5:30 a.m.

Stan drags himself up from the table, goes into the bedroom, and comes out with his Bible. Lazily, he flips through a few pages and then sighs, closing the book.

SCENE 6

Inside MIF, Bamenda. Morning.

Vera and Leonard are seated in front of a desktop. Madam Pascaline stands close by.

MADAM PASCALINE: The dry season this year is the harshest. See, *(bares the neck of her blouse)* I have a pullover inside, before this one I'm putting over my blouse.

VERA *(laughs)*: Someone said fat people don't feel cold. But I'm not even putting on a pullover.

MADAM PASCALINE: Whoever said that must not have been a fat person.

VERA: Very fat. Fatter than you. *(laughs.)*

MADAM PASCALINE: Whatever. All I know is, the weather in the mornings and evenings is not so good. I can't wait for the rainy season.

VERA: I hate the rainy season. You can't confidently make plans.

Stan comes in, clutching his briefcase in one hand.

VERA, LEONARD, MADAM PASCALINE: Good morning, sir.

STAN: Morning.

Stan goes into his office. The others look at each other, puzzled. Madam Pascaline comes closer and whispers.

MADAM PASCALINE: From the day he was introduced, I knew he didn't like his transfer to Bamenda. Always gloomy. What type of young man is this?

LEONARD: I thought so, too. But if I were in his shoes, I'd feel the same. Douala is more lively than Bamenda.

MADAM PASCALINE: I disagree, Leonard. Bamenda is a big city too, good climate, and of course, a lower cost of living. That's more important than (--)

VERA: Madam Pascaline, you complained about the weather.

MADAM PASCALINE: Yes, but Douala is an oven. And like I said, the cost of living in Bamenda is lower. Besides (--)

LEONARD: Not everyone evaluates life in those terms, Madam Pascaline. Young men have different desires, you know. Taking a young man from a city like Douala and sending him to Bamenda, even if as a Branch Manager, can be something some may find intolerable.

MADAM PASCALINE: He better adapts. He's here, so he should learn to love the place and get friendly with colleagues. I hate gloomy faces. One of these days, I'll let him know Madam Pascaline does not take nonsense from whosoever.

VERA: I don't think it's about his transfer. I believe he's going through some trial.

LEONARD: For close to two weeks?

VERA: What kind of question is that, Leonard? People can go through trials for much longer periods.

MADAM PASCALINE: Vera, everyone has problems. If I were to carry mine on my head, this is how my face would look like (*pulls down her cheeks*). We've learned to smile and be. Life goes on, no matter what.

VERA: Not everyone knows how to cope that well. I'll talk to him.

MADAM PASCALINE: What? What would you say even if he gives you permission?
Did you really see his face?

LEONARD: Vera, I advise you not to take the (--)

Stan comes out.

There's dead silence as he goes out of the building.

VERA: He probably heard us gossiping about him.

MADAM PASCALINE: Let him explode if he wants to. Or is he going to call the police?
(Laughs.)

LEONARD: I don't think he did. He would have come out here barking. *(Laughs.)*

VERA: It's enough. Lord, forgive me for gossiping. I keep my lips shut.

Madam Pascaline mouths Leonard goodbye and goes to her spot.

SCENE 7

Living room. Late afternoon.

Vera is talking on the phone.

VERA: Yes, I told her, but you know your mother.... *(Laughs.)*Oh, baby, and I'm blessed too. She's a wonderful woman can't wait, also ... She's right here with me.... Okay.

Vera hands the phone to Catherine.

CATHERINE: Hi Daya, good to hear from you again.... Fine, and you?... Yeah, thanks to Vera.... She's a great friend, has basically moved in with me... Yeah... Thank you.... Thank you... Amen.

Gives the phone to Vera.

VERA: Hmm... Missing you terribly...*(Laughs.)* okay...okay... I've heard you... *(Laughs.)* ... Stay focused and blessed... Love you, too. *(Drops the call).*

CATHERINE: I envy you.

VERA: Thank you. God will bring someone like Daya your way, someone deserving of your love.

CATHERINE: I hope so.

VERA: I could talk to Daya, you know. He might have a friend or know some worthy single guy.

Laughter.

CATHERINE: Please, do. I'm tired of being single.

VERA: But you can't be desperate. That's dangerous.

CATHERINE: I'm not desperate. Every young woman of our age wants to be married, so it's normal to be preoccupied about relationships. Call Daya.

VERA: Now? No, I can't. He'll call tomorrow or the day after.

SCENE 8

MIF building. Morning.

Vera and Leonard are each working on their computers. Madam Pascaline is standing, as usual, close by.

MADAM PASCALINE: The government ban on plastic packaging really nerves me. I have *njangi* this Sunday. Where do I get plantain leaves to wrap thirty loaves of fufu-corn?

LEONARD: They only know to decree a ban, and not to give a replacement. Anyway, why am I bothered? It's women's headache.

VERA: Go to the bakeries and see if it's only women's headache.

MADAM PASCALINE (*to Vera*): Don't mind him. That just shows he doesn't drink tea with bread every morning. He would have noticed that they now use newspapers to wrap the bread.

VERA (*laughing*): Leo, I understand you don't even have a girlfriend. With no wife, no child, and no responsibility, what do you do with your money?

LEONARD: I throw it away.

The main door opens. Stan comes in.

VERA, LEONARD, MADAM PASCALINE: Good morning, sir.

STAN (*whispers*): Hello.

Vera exchanges glances with Madam Pascaline and Leonard as Stan goes into his office.

LEONARD: Vera, I don't need to carry my responsibilities on my head.

MADAM PASCALINE: At least, Leo is mature enough to put on a working face despite his many responsibilities. Not like some older boss who should know better.

VERA: Madam Pascaline, please. We don't know what is eating him up. Therefore, we shouldn't make judgments. Besides, it's none of our business.

MADAM PASCALINE: None of our business? I don't just understand you at times, Vera. That you have a boss who never smiles, and his longest word outside of work is 'morning', or 'hello', and that's none of our business?

VERA: Do you think that's how he usually is?

MADAM PASCALINE: Who knows? This is how he came and this is how he's been.

LEONARD: Probably the nature of his face and his temperament, too.

MADAM PASCALINE: I thought you said yesterday that it was because he resents his transfer.

LEONARD: I didn't say so. I was just speculating.

MADAM PASCALINE: Speculating? Leo, you were very sure.

LEONARD: I wasn't sure, Madam Pascaline.

MADAM PASCALINE: Vera, come to my rescue oh. You heard him yesterday, didn't you?

Vera motions that her mouth is zipped.

MADAM PASCALINE: Oh, I forgot. This is called gossiping, and Sister Vera does not gossip. See you later. (*Goes to her spot.*)

3:30 p.m.

Vera stands outside the building. Stan comes out and heads for his car.

VERA: E-ee-excuse me, Mr. Ngu, can I have a word with you?

STAN: Any problem, Miss Ngam?

VERA: Um...Ehmm...I don't know if I'm right or wrong in my assessment, but I just feel like I need to talk to you.

STAN (*rudely*): About?

VERA (*looks around*): Um...er...It's somehow private. Can we go somewhere? Maybe inside the building. In your office?

STAN: May I know the subject matter?

VERA: Well, I know...you are new here, and I don't know you that much, but...I honestly feel like you're going through some kind of emotional trauma... and I just wanted to let you know that God cares about you...and you'll be fine. You'll be fine. That's all.

Stan exhales and motions to his car.

Inside the car.

STAN: My girlfriend of three years – actually, I'd known her for more than a decade, but we were in a relationship for three years while I waited for her to graduate from the university. She recently called off the relationship. I got some leads that another man is involved.

I don't know how true that is. I know I have to be a man and buckle up. I've been promoted, and I have workers under me, and I need to behave, but I'm just emotionally and psychologically unstable. I know you guys must have noticed.

VERA: Yeah.

STAN: Thanks for the concern.

VERA: You're welcome. I'm sorry to hear about your pain. You'll overcome as you trust God more...ehmm... My best friend is going through the same trauma, and she's pulling through. So, I know, God will heal your heart. Take courage.

By the way, are you a Christian?

STAN: Yeah, I am. I got born-again five years ago.

VERA: Good to hear. Please, take heart. God will heal your heart, and you'll come out stronger and better.

STAN: Thank you so much, Miss Ngam.

VERA: Can I have your number? Preferably, WhatsApp. When I reach home, I'll send some scriptural passages for encouragement.

Stan dictates the number.

STAN: Where do you live?

VERA: Never mind. I'll take a taxi. See you tomorrow, sir.

STAN: Thank you, Vera. I appreciate it.

VERA: You're welcome, sir.

Vera comes out of the car. Stan drives away.

SCENE 9

Vera's residence. Evening.

Catherine knocks on the door. A few minutes later, a sleepy Vera opens to let her in.

CATHERINE: Sorry to disturb your sleep. I tried your number, but your phone is switched off. Since night is falling, I was afraid you may not come, so I decided to come

spend the night here. I can't stand being alone, especially with the erratic electricity supply in our quarter.

VERA: It's okay; this is your place. How was work today?

CATHERINE: I just managed to go through the day. Ugh. Life is so hard these days. How was yours?

VERA: Tedious. I was so tired when I came back from work and decided to take a nap. A three hours' nap. (*Laughs.*)

CATHERINE: Our talking late into the night yesterday is the cause.

VERA: Ah, don't feel guilty. I want to see you standing back on your feet.

CATHERINE: I wish I could sleep as you do. For me, it's an hour at a time, or an hour and a half at the most. Then I wake up with a racing heart...and to the reality that my life with Gerald was just a dream. Then, it could take me two hours to fall asleep again. To keep my mind from going crazy, I fantasize a lot about living with him.

VERA: Cathy, I know you're grieving. I try to understand. But I must say you hurt yourself the more and delay the healing process when you always dream of the life you've missed with Gerald.

CATHERINE: But I don't know what to occupy my mind with. Honestly. Everything drifts back to him. It's so hard to believe that someone can promise you so much and then walk away.

VERA: Can we talk about something else?

SCENE 10

Outside the MIF building. 3:30 p.m.

Vera comes out of the office and stands along the road to get a taxi. Stan comes out and sees her. With a big grin, he approaches.

VERA: Good afternoon, sir. You look awesome today, and I'm very happy.

STAN: Thank you, Vera. You see, I've been thinking. Can I get to know that friend you talked about last week? The one with a broken heart.

VERA: Catherine?

STAN: If that's her name, yes.

VERA: Sir, I don't think it's a good idea.

STAN: Just wanting to meet her; that's all.

VERA: No. I only used her example to encourage you. Nothing more.

STAN: I've been thinking about her since then.

VERA: Sir, I don't think it's a good idea. Besides, what will I tell Catherine? That I've been gossiping about her?

STAN: No. Look at it this way: my fiancée broke up with me, I was transferred to Bamenda, you didn't know anything about my disappointment, yet God used you to encourage me. And although you never planned it, you mentioned your friend, whose

fiancé also walked away. And now she's captured my heart even though I'm yet to meet her.

VERA: So?

STAN: Vera, can't you see the hand of Providence in this?

VERA: Sir, don't be quick to connect the dots.

STAN: Call me Stan. Think about your friend, too, okay? She needs love, I bet you. I've been in her shoes, and I understand exactly what she's going through.

VERA: Catherine is pulling on. She will be fine.

STAN: Are you making a decision on her behalf? Whether you wanted it or not, her case slipped out of your mouth. You must complete what you started.

VERA: What did I start?

STAN (*smiles*): I won't allow you to quench the hope you placed in my heart. It's either I see your friend...or then, (*laughs.*) you become the woman that gets my attention. I must admit, you are such a nice person.

VERA: Sorry, Mr. Too Late Hewitt. This is my husband's ring on my finger.

STAN: The information I have with me says you're still single.

CATHERINE: My bride price has been paid, but my husband traveled before we could do the civil and church weddings.

STAN: I want to meet Catherine.

VERA: Do not insist.

STAN: I won't give you peace until you let me see her. It's a promise.

Silence.

VERA: Okay. I'll talk to her. If she consents to want to know you, I'll tell you.

STAN: Thanks, Vera. I appreciate it.

VERA: Good day, sir.

STAN: Expecting to hear from you tomorrow.

VERA: Bye.

SCENE 11

Catherine's residence. Late afternoon.

Catherine and Vera set the table.

VERA: Our new manager equally suffered a painful breakup. While trying to encourage him, I mentioned your case. It was really just meant to encourage him, nothing more. But now he says he wants to see you.

CATHERINE: Are you serious? O my God!

VERA: Catherine, be careful. I don't know the guy that much. I only told you because he promised to bug me until I let him see you.

CATHERINE: I'm not saying it's going to be anything. I'm just excited, you know. After all the pain and all the struggles I'm trying to cope with, trying to forget and move on, here comes someone interested in me. I thought it would take eternity to have another guy.

VERA: Honestly, I feel bad for being loose with my mouth. I shouldn't have mentioned your case to Stan. I was desperate to help the man, so (--)

CATHERINE: Why are you blaming yourself? You can never tell.

VERA: The man is not yet emotionally stable. And you, you're still missing Gerald.

CATHERINE: And I need to forget him. Is this new guy born-again?

VERA: From his confession, yes.

CATHERINE: I want to meet him. Who knows? They say one door closes, another one opens. Why should I keep staring at a closed door and wishing it could open, meanwhile God could probably be opening another door for me? Why the fear?

VERA: If it doesn't go well, I would carry the blame.

CATHERINE: Never, Vera. I know how much you desire to see me happy. I acknowledge your concern for me. If it doesn't go well, I promise you I'd be fine. As you said, this is just a meet-the-other-broken-heart rendez-vous, right?

Vera nods.

SCENE 12

Catherine's residence. Afternoon.

Catherine looks at the clock on the wall, goes to the window, and peeps outside. Then she comes back and takes her phone on the table, intending to make a call, but hesitates. Finally, she goes back to the window and stands there.

A few minutes later, a car pulls up at the front of the house. Catherine arranges her dress.

Vera knocks and comes in, followed by a shy Stan.

VERA: And so here we are. Cathy, this is my boss, Mr. Ngu Stan. Stan, this is my friend, Catherine.

STAN (*timid*): Glad to meet you.

Stan extends his right palm. Catherine receives it.

CATHERINE (*timid*): You are welcome, Mr. Ngu Stan.

STAN: Call me Stan.

Awkward laughter.

CATHERINE (to Vera:): I prepared something.

VERA: Good girl. Shall we?

CATHERINE: Yes. Stan, this way, please.

SCENE 13

Amusement park. Late afternoon.

Stan and Catherine are seated on a bench.

STAN: Kate, I empathize with your situation. I know your pain.

CATHERINE: I wonder if you really do. You know, to have someone you've trusted and planned a life with just walk away, with no explanation, no reason for the termination of their love for you, is the hardest thing to bear.

STAN: That's exactly what happened to me.

CATHERINE: But at least, she told you she didn't want the relationship. Mine never said a thing. Just went away, blocked the phone and social media accounts, wouldn't reply to my emails. Nothing. To date, I can't wrap my head around the reason he did that.

STAN: Still alive?

CATHERINE: Yeah. *(Laughs.)* Lives in this town.

STAN: And he doesn't see you?

CATHERINE: I met him some time ago at Commercial Avenue, but that was just it. I wanted to talk, but he pretended not to see me. Not knowing what his reaction would be if I forced him to acknowledge my presence, I let go.

STAN: Dating another girl?

CATHERINE: I don't know. I went to his place several times immediately after I noticed he had withdrawn from me. He wasn't in. One time, I knew he was in. I knocked and knocked and knocked.

He just kept on avoiding me until my heart finally accepted the fact: it was over. So that's why I said you do not exactly understand my pain.

STAN: Does it matter if I understand *exactly*? He's gone for good. The right thing now is to pick up the broken pieces of your life, put them together, and give to someone worthy of your love.

CATHERINE: They always seem worthy of your love until you trust them, and then they break your heart and betray your trust.

STAN: Hey, don't go that far.

CATHERINE (*laughs*): Well, when we first came together, I never saw him as unworthy. I guess that's why his walking away is so hard to bear. The past six weeks have been the darkest moments of my life.

STAN: I know. When people hurt us, it's easier to see others as potential hurters, but the truth is, more people will love and cherish us than those who'll hurt us.

Kate, I love you. I know this seems too early to admit, but I know it's something I'll eventually say to you, so why not now?

Silence.

CATHERINE: Stan, I don't just know what to say. Ehmm...ehmm...

STAN: You love me. I know it. I can see it in your eyes and in your smile.

Laughter.

SCENE 14

Restaurant. Evening.

In the background, Frank Edwards's I Can't Stop Loving You plays.

CATHERINE: Beautiful gospel song.

STAN: Yeah. Love song. I just wish they could repeat some three lines.

CATHERINE: You're funny.

STAN: No, I'm not funny, I'm happy. I'm in love. Again.

SCENE 15

Vera's residence. Night.

CATHERINE: I'm so pumped up, I thought I should come here and release some of the dopamine by recounting our outing today.

VERA: I'm all ears.

CATHERINE: He told me he loves me!

VERA: Yeah?

CATHERINE: Honestly, I wish I could tell him the same thing, but I feared it was too early to admit.

VERA: You sure you want him?

CATHERINE: As sure as the word. Why?

VERA: I talked with Daya this evening. You know, like I suggested, I did ask him if there was someone you could get to know, from his friends or colleagues, Cameroonian nationals.

He asked this evening if you'd like a Bakossi guy. He's not in school, he's a bush-faller in the real sense of the word.

CATHERINE: Wow. Vera, thanks for you and Daya's concern, but a bird at hand is worth two in the bush.

Hysterical laughter.

VERA: Hey. (*Sighs and shakes her head.*) You almost killed me with laughter. I'm happy to see you've regained your sense of humor. But, you can't conclude on Stan yet.

CATHERINE: But I want to concentrate on the relationship. The UK is a faraway land. A bush-faller is certainly a juicier option, but as I said, I want a bird at hand, not in the bush. You know, if a bird at hand can fly away, what more of the one in the bush?

VERA: Okay. No problem. Daya said it was still a consideration.

CATHERINE: Tell him I appreciate the effort.

SCENE 16

MIF. Morning.

Vera and Leonard are in their respective corners. Madam Pascaline is at her usual gossip spot.

MADAM PASCALINE: The morning cold is getting worse and worse these days. I've caught a cold.

LEONARD: Madame Pascaline, you always have something to complain of. I hate whiners!

MADAM PASCALINE: What? Leonard, you talk to me that way? You've suddenly developed wings?

VERA: Leonard, that was rude.

LEONARD: How? If it's not the weather, it's the economy or a neighbor's child. When you complain so early in the morning, you set the day's tone in a negative mode.

MADAM PASCALINE: Says who? If you don't like what I say, you can close your ears. After all, it's Vera I usually talk to, not you. Rude boy.

The main door opens. Stan comes in.

STAN: Good morning, everyone.

VERA, LEONARD, MADAM PASCALINE: Good morning, sir.

Stan approaches Vera, grinning broadly. She smiles in return.

Madam Pascaline and Leonard exchange suspicious glances.

STAN: How are you this morning?

VERA: Fine. And you?

STAN: Great.

VERA: It's visible.

STAN: Thanks to you.

Madam Pascaline and Leonard exchange suspicious glances again

STAN: See you later. (*Goes to his office.*)

MADAM PASCALINE: Vera?

VERA: What?

LEONARD: Did you talk to him as promised?

VERA: What do you want to hear?

MADAM PASCALINE: Vera, I'm building different opinions about you. The smiles you two exchanged are not ordinary. Stolen kisses already?

VERA: What!? Excuse me.

Vera goes into Stan's office.

LEONARD: I trust no girl these days. Whether it's the prostitute at Mobil Nkwen or the Bible thumper that sleeps in church, they're all the same. Unfaithful creatures.

MADAM PASCALINE: I'm so shocked. Vera's bride price has been paid. Had she told you that?

LEONARD: What difference does that make? A man is living with an unfaithful woman under the same roof, and you think faithfulness is possible when the man is a million miles away?

Inside Stan's office.

STAN (*smiles*): I noticed your colleagues got suspicious when I stood in front of your desk.

VERA: Yeah. That's one of the reasons I've come. Please, let's keep a working relationship here. I'm very conscious of the image I portray to the public, as a Christian.

STAN: Never mind. When my relationship with Catherine comes to the public, they'll understand and drop their nasty thinking about us. I think we should give them more reasons for suspicions.

VERA: No. I'm not comfortable. About you and Catherine.

STAN: What?

VERA: She told me you avowed that you love her.

STAN: Yes, I did. Any problem?

VERA: On your first date? First day of meeting each other?

STAN: Yeah. What's wrong with that? Love at first sight is not a sin.

VERA: Stan, I'm afraid. For Catherine's sake and for mine too. If anything happens to her, I'll take the blame for bringing you two together.

STAN: There's nothing to fear. I love Catherine. I understand her pain. I'll care for her heart and help her completely heal from the wound of the other relationship. Trust me.

VERA (*with a drop of sarcasm*): I trust you.

STAN: Vera!

VERA: Stan, I don't care how you see it. That was too rash. First, you promised me it was just a rencontre for acquaintance's sake. But it turned into an opportunity for avowal of love.

Did you really understand what you were doing? Catherine has barely healed, and here you are, exciting her (--)

STAN: Vera, Vera, Vera. Be at peace. Do not let your heart be unnecessarily anxious. That's not healthy.

VERA (*heaves*): Good day to you. We'll talk later.

STAN: Thanks, sweetheart.

Vera comes out of the office. Madam Pascaline still has that suspicious stare.

VERA: Madam Pascaline, it's not what you think.

MADAM PASCALINE: Then, tell me what to think.

VERA: I can't tell you, not because it's something wrong or something I wouldn't want to tell anyone, but because it's called gossip.

MADAM PASCALINE (*leaving*): Oh, I forgot. Leonard, do have a wonderful day, dear.

SCENE 17

Inside Stan's car, in front of Catherine's residence. Evening.

STAN: Thanks for the outing, dear.

CATHERINE: I should be the one thanking you. You made my day. I haven't had such a good day in a long time.

STAN: You know, I kinda hate the fact that the hours flew like lightning. It seems like we've been out for just a few minutes.

CATHERINE: Don't worry. Tomorrow is another day.

STAN: Kate, your friend is concerned. I understand she should, 'cause she cares about you. So I want to help her relax her heart. I want to prove to you both that I mean business.

I want to heal and move on, and I also want to see you recover and get over the painful memories of the past. That's why I'm so serious, although my speed looks a little bit hasty...and crazy.

Laughter.

STAN: I hope you're comfortable with it.

CATHERINE: Kind of.

STAN: Kind of? I like your humor, but I just wish kind of really mean serious. Honestly, Kate, I'm dead serious about you.

With all my heart, I promise to make every effort to see you happy, happier than when you were with Jerold.

CATHERINE: Gerald.

STAN: Doesn't matter. (*Holds her hand.*) I want to give you my heart, and I want yours in return. I promise to cherish and protect your heart. Will you do the same for mine?

CATHERINE (*inhales deeply*): Yes, yes, yes.

STAN: Thanks so much, sweetheart.

Kisses.

SCENE 18

Vera's living room. Evening.

CATHERINE: It's crazy, it's overwhelming... but's happening. It's happening!

VERA: So you think the relationship is moving in the right direction?

CATHERINE: Yeah. Stan is very, very caring. In many ways, he's far better than Gerald.

VERA: Hein?

CATHERINE: Yes. He's known the pain himself, so it's kinda really crazy.

VERA: Crazy, crazy, crazy. What?

CATHERINE: You can't understand 'cause this thing comes through experience. When two hearts longing for love meet, what do you expect? An explosive romantic ignition!

VERA: Cool down.

Catherine sits down while laughing.

VERA: I don't mean you should sit down. You and Stan need to slow down. For my sake.

Vera leans against a wall. Catherine approaches her.

CATHERINE: Dear, he assured me that he will live up to his word and not cause your confidence to be broken. See, we're both grateful to you for the part you played in bringing us together. We are really grateful.

VERA: Cathy, all I want is your happiness. I've been praying these days, and honestly, I don't find it comfortable that I should be involved in this. The flame has been lit, and there's no way to quench it.

CATHERINE: What?

VERA: Everything is happening so fast and so crazy that I don't believe you guys are expressing necessary caution.

He told you he loved you on the first day of meeting you. I might not have had the experience, but I know that's not normal. He's still emotionally unstable!

CATHERINE: It's not like we are sexual partners. For God's sake, we're Christians!

VERA: That's not what I mean. The speed is my problem. Are you just so excited to rush along with someone you've not known, someone you just met?

CATHERINE: You introduced us to each other. If anything, you should not be the one kicking against the relationship.

VERA: Cathy, I told you what happened. You, as well as him, said you only desired to see him. That that was all.

CATHERINE: Well, it turned out that was not all. Something germinated from there and is sure to blossom.

VERA: It's not like I don't want to see you happy. But I hate the situation where I have to stay up at night praying that this doesn't fail, and I get the blame.

Now you are excited, and it's my turn to get panic attacks in the night.

CATHERINE: I don't understand the reason for your anxiety. You don't expect that God should work in my life the same way he does with you. He spectacularly brought you and Daya, and I must admit it was great. But you can't expect that he does it for me in the same manner. That's why you are Vera, and I'm Catherine.

VERA: I am not saying what you think.

CATHERINE: Then, be more explicit. You believe this is not God's will for me?

VERA: You pray and decide what it is. (*Goes into her bedroom.*)

SCENE 19

Stan's apartment. Evening.

Stan is watching television in the living room. There's a knock on the door. He goes and opens the door. Standing there, with a travelers' box by her side, is Christy.

SCENE 20

Vera's bedroom. Night.

Vera is talking on the phone.

VERA: Yeah... Missing you, too... You can say that again. (*Laughs.*)...hmmm...I know. (*Laughs.*)... Why should I not laugh?... Honey, wait, let me talk... Okay, since you can read my mind so well... Yeah... I remember those days... (*Laughs.*) I fell helplessly in love with you...of course. God is good...

I'm a little bit concerned, but you know she's in love, and when one is in love, it's hard to give them counsel... Please, pray for her. I just hope the anxiety I have is because of

the speed and not really because the relationship is doomed to fail.... Yeah... Very true... And I'll be blamed for life...

Having seen the intensity of her grief for Gerald, I can't imagine I'd be able to say enough comforting words if Stan doesn't stay true to his promise...yeah...really delicate...

SCENE 21

MIF. Morning.

Vera comes in through the main door and meets Madam Pascaline.

MADAM PASCALINE: The boss came in not too long ago. Didn't even look your way.

VERA: Was he supposed to look my way?

MADAM PASCALINE: I don't know, but it looked odd to me. He looked worried, too. He didn't greet anyone, even though he almost stepped on my toes.

VERA: Madam Pascaline, please.

MADAM PASCALINE: You better go talk to him. I hate his chameleonic attitude.

VERA: Why don't you go say that to him yourself?

MADAM PASCALINE: Did you two quarrel?

VERA: Where? When?

MADAM PASCALINE: Sorry, I forgot, it would be gossip if you told me.

VERA: Madam Pascaline, listen. Nothing is going on between Mr. Ngu and me. I did talk to him, but I'm not responsible for the way he chooses to behave. Stop judging me.

MADAM PASCALINE: All right. It's okay. Have you seen Leonard?

VERA: Probably, still on the way coming. Appears there's a partial ghost town today. Few taxis on the road.

MADAM PASCALINE: Anyway, I hope he comes. From the look of things, it's like you don't want to talk. I'd be bored today. Stella is too quiet for my liking.

VERA: I wish I were like her. My mouth puts me in trouble sometimes.

SCENE 22

City Chemist Roundabout. Roadside. Afternoon.

VERA: Calm down. You can't act on imaginations.

CATHERINE: These are not imaginations. Something is wrong. It's about a week now, Stan's attitude towards me has changed.

VERA: Are you really sure? He's quieter these days, but he hasn't said a word to me.

CATHERINE: He doesn't call anymore, and when I call, he doesn't always pick immediately, or when he does pick, he either complains of tiredness or says he was still

thinking to call me later. He doesn't read my WhatsApp messages, he has even changed his settings. I can't see his last seen.

VERA: Calm down. Maybe you're overthinking and your mind is playing tricks on you.

CATHERINE (*emotional*): I'm not ready for another disappointment. I'm not. My heart would break beyond repair.

VERA: Cathy, we're in public; control yourself. You aren't sure yet, so don't conclude before you know the truth.

SCENE 23

Catherine's bedroom. Night.

Catherine dials Stan's number. It rings and rings and rings and rings. No answer. She sits on the bed, tears in her eyes. She dials again. Still no answer. She sits for a few minutes. Then her phone beeps. It's a message.

CATHERINE: 'My sister in the Lord?' Sister in the Lord? What's going on?.. 'life is complicated. Ups and downs are part of it. That is why we must learn to give our hearts to God alone. Man fails, but God never fails. Shalom.

Is he trying to console me before breaking my heart? What does he mean by we must learn to give our hearts to God alone? Was I wrong to give him my heart, as he requested? Didn't he also give me his heart?

Silence for several minutes. Catherine stares at the phone's screen.

CATHERINE: This is not normal. Not again....Not again. Am I under some curse?
Could it be?...

But who could be responsible? My stepmother?... Likely. She has never treated me like a daughter... God, could this be true? Or am I making this up? Oh, God, help me!

This Vera of a friend too, I don't trust her that much. People are not always what they appear to be.... We claim to serve the same God, yet she has it so easy, but I go from heartbreak to heartbreak. It's not normal. No, it's not normal....

SCENE 24

Outside a church building. About 11 a.m.

Worshippers are dispersing. Vera runs after Catherine.

VERA: I didn't see you during choir practice yesterday. I tried your number last night, but you didn't pick. Anything the matter?

CATHERINE: No.

VERA: Talk to me.

CATHERINE: I'll be fine. I've gone through it before. So, it's no big deal.

VERA: I'll talk to Stan tomorrow in the office, okay?

CATHERINE: Whatever.

Catherine walks away, leaving Vera confused.

VERA: I wish I could turn back the hand of time.

SCENE 25

Outside the MIF office. 3:30 p.m.

Vera waits. A few minutes later, Stan comes out.

VERA: Can I have a word with you?

STAN: Vera, it's been a hectic day. I'm tired. I just want to go home and rest.

VERA: You just have to talk. It's very important.

STAN: Okay. What's it?

VERA: What is the state of affairs between you and Catherine?

STAN: I'm praying about it.

VERA: What are you praying about, Stan? If you were still undecided about Catherine, why did you get that far with her?

STAN: We hadn't gotten far, okay? We were just getting to know each other, that's all. Telling her I loved her was not synonymous with engagement.

VERA: You're kidding me. Listen to yourself. Getting to know each other? After all you told her and me? Is that how getting to know each other looks like?

I regret the part I played in this whole drama. My friend was basically still heartbroken over her former relationship, that's why I objected at first to your desire to get to know her.

STAN: I'm sorry

VERA: Meaning?

STAN: When a man plans for something and is intent in its pursuit, and suddenly starts saying he's praying about it, it sure indicates there are misgivings about the said plan. Really I can't disregard my convictions.

VERA (*tears filling her eyes*): Stan, you know the pain; you've been there yourself. Left alone, Catherine would have by now become better than when you met her.

But you engaged her emotions, and now you are leaving her in the middle of the road? For what reason? How do you expect her to take this?

STAN: I know it's going to be tough on her, but more on me if I decide to continue with the relationship. Vera, I'm tired. I want to go home.

VERA: You are heartless. Really.

Vera walks to the roadside. Stan mounts his car and rides away.

SCENE 26

Outside Catherine's apartment. About 5 p.m.

Vera rings the bell. After almost a minute, she dials a number on her phone. The phone thuds.

Vera sighs and sits on the steps.

7 p.m. Catherine comes.

CATHERINE: What are you doing here?

VERA: To see you.

Silence.

VERA: I talked with Stan today. Dear, I really wish this were a dream. I hate myself for what has happened. Some men can really be heartless.

CATHERINE: I hope you're satisfied.

VERA: What do you mean? Catherine, I feel your pain. I do.

CATHERINE: Pretender. I won't hide anything from you. I'm just coming from the Prophet in Sonac Street, and he confirmed my suspicions. So don't you rejoice yet, my God is on the throne. And when your manipulation boomerangs, you won't want to hear my name mentioned anywhere around you.

VERA: What are you talking about?

CATHERINE: Your sin has found you out. Nothing is hidden under the sun when God is up there.

VERA: Catherine, I know how you feel, but I won't take that accusation from you. You can blame me all you want, as long as you don't go the length of associating me with diabolic participation. Not everyone out there who calls himself a prophet is true.

CATHERINE: And not everyone who calls herself a friend is genuine.

VERA: Catherine! You're letting a fake prophet, a well-known scammer, to come between us?

CATHERINE: He's not a fake. I believe him. It was just a confirmation of what I already felt in my heart.

VERA: Have you forgotten that initially, I opposed your relationship with Stan? For no other reason than the fact that you were still grieving and needed to heal properly? All I wanted was for your good. And now this? You've shocked me!

Catherine goes in and closes the door.

SCENES 27 & 28 RUN SIMULTANEOUSLY

8 p.m.

CATHERINE: I overturn this curse in the name of Jesus. I send it back to the sender in the name of Jesus. Lord, your word says every curse causeless shall not alight. Please, forgive my sins and take this curse off my life.

I declare that I am blessed, not cursed. I declare that I am married, not single. I declare that I'm loved, not hated. I declare that I'm favored, not ill-favored.

Intercut...

VERA: Father, this is the worst accusation ever. I didn't know the relationship would turn out like this. Please, forgive me for the part I played in it. Please, forgive me.

Intercut...

CATHERINE: Every arrow that has been shot against my life, I release the fire of the Holy Ghost against it. Fire, consume. Consume! Consume! Consume!

Anywhere they have declared that I shall not marry, I release thunder against that altar!

Any altar militating against my life, receive fire. I decree and declare that only the will of God is prevailing in my life. No weapon fashioned against me shall prosper.

Intercut...

VERA: Lord, I hate myself. I have a loose mouth. Help me to set a guard over my mouth, even as you expect of me.

Catherine will need a mighty miracle to heal from this wound. Father, move upon her heart and bring healing.

She will never listen to me again. Please, send her help.

Intercut...

10 p.m.

Catherine, sweating profusely, takes a small bottle from her handbag. She pours out a little of the liquid content into her palm, rubs both hands together, and applies the substance to her body, as one would apply body lotion.

CATHERINE: The curse is over in Jesus's Name. The glory of the Lord is upon me. I arise and shine. I'm covered, I'm blessed, I'm favored, I'm married, in Jesus's Name. It is finished.

A FEW DAYS LATER

SCENE 29

Street. Morning.

Catherine walks through a less busy street, looking bright and happy. Two blocks away, she turns into a driveway.

She stands at the door for a while, before knocking.

A few seconds later, the door opens.

STAN: Catherine!

CATHERINE: Hi, honey.

STAN: What are you doing here? You should have called me before coming!

CATHERINE: But you don't pick my calls.

STAN (*looks past Catherine*): I guess your friend talked with you already. Catherine, I am sorry, I didn't have the courage to tell you myself.

I admit I've caused you pain, but know that I'm also praying that God will grant you comfort and peace.

CATHERINE: Stan, tell me this is a joke. You of all people? Where is your promise to love and to cherish? Where is your promise to care for my heart?

STAN: Catherine, I'm busy.

CATHERINE: Where is your promise to make me happy, happier than when I was with Gerald? Why do you have to be the one to further shatter my heart? Where have I gone wrong?

Is it something you noticed in me that you found repulsive? Why suddenly change your mind for no apparent reason?

STAN (*looking past Catherine*): Catherine, I don't want to talk much. I didn't find anything repulsive in you.

CATHERINE (*kneels*): Please, if I offended you (--)

STAN: Catherine. No, no, no. Stand up! You didn't offend me. Please, please, just get up. Get up. Get up and leave!

CATHERINE (*sobbing*): Stan, you told me you know the pain (--)

STAN: I'm sorry. I'll call you on the phone, but you have to go now, please. I will call you on the phone. Leave. (*Goes inside.*)

Catherine leaves. A block away, she bypasses with Christy.

CATHERINE (*verbalizing*): This should be the lady. This is the reason for his sudden change of mind.

Poor girl, you're in for trouble. You don't know the man you are giving your heart to.

SCENE 30

Stan's office. Morning.

*Stan is seated on his chair. His name tag is on the table in block letters: **NGU STAN**. To his left is Christy's picture.*

Vera comes in without knocking. Stan frowns.

VERA: So you dumbed my friend who did you no wrong for a girl who had left you heartbroken.

STAN: How do you know?

VERA: You used my friend to fill the void in your aching heart, and when your ex came begging, you went running back to her with all your heart, not considering the other woman who had tried to work with you to mend the heart.

STAN: It's a bitter truth, but which do you prefer: that I stay with your friend when I realize my heart is not with her, for the sake of civility, or let go and give her a chance at finding a man that truly loves her?

VERA: Civility? You never loved her?

STAN: I thought I did, but it was all an illusion. I wanted to move on with my life, but unfortunately, I'd never forgotten Christy in the real sense of the word.

I only now realize that I was merely trying to suppress the feelings of emptiness in my heart. And I think your friend would have done the same if her Jerold came back.

VERA: So, your decision is based on an assumption of what she could have done under the same circumstances?

STAN: No, but she could have done the same. (*Looking through some files on his table:*) Vera, I think it will be in our best interest to let sleeping dogs lie.

I could be of some assistance to Catherine, but for the moment she's out of touch. She's too emotional.

VERA: See who is talking.

STAN: What has happened, has happened. We don't have a good working relationship anymore, and that's not fun.

VERA: Stan, God will (--)

STAN: Hold it there! I'm not ready to let go of Christy for an unknown Catherine. Excuse me. And before I forget, give me the respect I deserve as your boss. Mr. Ngu Stan, not Stan anymore.

VERA: Just insert an A after the S in your name. What do you get? (*In a low tone*):

SATAN. Mr. Ngu SATAN, that's who you are. (*Walks out and bangs the door.*)

SCENE 31

Catherine's residence.

Vera knocks and knocks. No answer. She takes out her phone and dials. No answer.

She composes a text.

VERA: 'Cathy, I'm greatly concerned about you. I take the blame for what Stan has done to you. Dear, I'm so sorry for bringing such a man your way. I only beg that you let me see you. I want to share in your pain and your tears. Love you.'

After waiting for a while, she slowly walks away.

SCENE 32

Stan's office.

Vera comes in.

VERA: Mr. Ngu, we're Christians. At least, you admitted to me that you are one.

STAN: Christian doesn't mean perfection. We make mistakes.

VERA: Yeah. But don't you think that when you make a mistake, you should clean it up?

STAN: I do not love Catherine.

VERA: My problem is not whether you still love her or not; I'm not seeking to see you return to her. Why did you choose to end it this way?

STAN: How?

VERA: Stan... sorry, Mr. Ngu, why didn't you sit her down and explain everything?

That could have prepared her heart for the pain. That could have lessened the pain.

STAN: There's no perfect way to break up. It causes pain, no matter which way you choose to go about it. But I know she'll be fine. I'm praying for her.

VERA: Fine? As in you being fine when you first came here?

STAN: I wasn't going to grieve forever. If you had let me be, we wouldn't be here now.

VERA (*laughs*): I said it. I knew it! When it would come crumbling down, Vera would take the blame. And here we are. She blames me, you blame me. No problem, I take the blame.

I asked the Lord to forgive me for a compulsive attitude that led me to say things I wasn't supposed to say. Thank you, Stan, for keeping your promise to be a trustworthy guy.

STAN: Have you ever been heartbroken before?

VERA: No, why?

STAN: Then don't judge me, 'cause you don't know the pain and the temptations of a broken heart.

VERA: That doesn't excuse you, Stan. You have left my friend not just twice worse, but probably a thousand times worse. Temptations come, but we are not supposed to give in. Ultimately, we are responsible for our actions.

STAN: I'm willing to help Catherine. I did send her an encouraging text last night, but she refused to read it.

VERA: I forgive you. For the Lord's sake.

STAN: Thank you, Vera. Let's have a good working relationship.

After staring at him, Vera goes out.

SCENE 33

Club. Night.

Catherine is seated on a table with one drunk, middle-aged man.

MAN: Are you as free as Frida?

CATHERINE: Why ask? You don't look like one who is interested in settling down.

MAN: I may, someday.

VERA: Well, I'm not even interested. Never going to settle down. I don't trust no man. You guys are all the same.

MAN: I may be different if you just give me a chance. I'm not perfect, but you can perfect me.

CATHERINE: I tell you what? Go, arrange for the wedding, okay? When you have the Mayor and the guests seated, ready to sign the certificate, come and propose to me. Then, I will follow you to the council and marry you.

MAN: You can make a good comedian. (*Goes to the bartender.*)

CATHERINE: I'm not going to date no man. None will ever break my heart again.

ONE MONTH LATER

SCENE 34

MIF. Afternoon.

Vera is in her spot. Stan comes out of his office to her.

STAN: I've got good news for you and me, Miss Ngam. You don't have to nauseate any longer each time you see me, 'cause I'm leaving. I've been recruited by the government. I'm moving to Buea.

VERA: Great news. When are you leaving? This evening? Tomorrow?

STAN: I wish I could, but never mind, I've informed the headquarters. Someone is coming next week.

Stan goes back to his office. Vera turns to look at Leonard, ashamed. Leonard shrugs his shoulders.

SCENE 35

Catherine's bedroom. Night.

Catherine is seated on the bed, head hung down. There's a bottle of alcohol beside the bed, on the floor.

14 MONTHS LATER

SCENE 36

Catherine's bedroom. 9:56 p.m.

Catherine comes in and puts on the light. She goes to the bottle at the top of the bed, fills a glass, and gulps it. Then, she falls on the bed and sobs for a while before getting up to a kneeling position.

CATHERINE: Lord, I can't take this anymore. This is not the life I want to live... The pain is unbearable, I can't continue like this...I don't know who to trust, I don't know what to do, I'm so confused...but I want to heal, I want back my life with you...

I'm afraid to fail again, I'm ashamed of myself, but I can't continue like this. Heal me...

She sobs until the clock reads 10:34 p.m.

SCENE 37

Vera drives to Catherine's residence and knocks on the door.

A woman opens.

VERA: Good morning, Madam. I'm Vera, Catherine's friend.

WOMAN: Sorry, nobody lives here by that name. My family took up residence here four months ago.

VERA: I see. Do you know where the former tenant lives?

WOMAN: No idea.

VERA: Thank you.

Vera goes back to her car and drives away.

SCENE 38 (CONTINUOUS ACTION)

Vera parks by the roadside and comes out. She looks at the house in front of her, then walks up to the bell, and presses it. Seconds later, the door opens.

CATHERINE: Vera!

The two friends fall on each other's necks.

After the initial emotions of joy and excitement abate, they go inside to the living room.

CATHERINE: I'm so sorry. I don't know how I can express my apologies.

VERA: It's okay. I'm happy to see you again. It seemed like an eternity.

CATHERINE: Yeah. I'm so sorry, my sister and my friend.

VERA: I was worried about you. After trying in vain to reconnect, I felt like the Lord wanted me to let you be.

Daya and I felt assured that God will bring you back to right relationship with him. We never ceased praying for you.

Then yesterday, I had this burning desire to come and see you.

CATHERINE: I still have questions. I don't understand why I had to go through the disappointments and have my hearts mercilessly broken.

VERA: I'm glad to have you back. We believe with you that you'll be fine.

CATHERINE: How is Daya?

VERA: He's fine

CATHERINE: You have a baby?

VERA: A boy. He's a month old.

CATHERINE: I'm so ashamed. Will I ever overcome the painful memories?

VERA: Yes, and you will have a testimony. There's more, I mean better things, in store for you.

CATHERINE: Thanks so much. Let's go to your place. I want to see the baby and his father.

SCENE 39

At the Daya's.

Vera and Catherine come into the living room.

VERA: Honey, come and see who we have here.

DAYA, probably thirty years old, comes out of the bedroom.

DAYA: Kate! Dear Lord Jesus.

They embrace.

CATHERINE: Happy to see you too, Daya. You've grown. *(Laughs.)* That's the only word I can find to describe how changed you look.

DAYA: You too. It's been such a long time.

CATHERINE: Yeah. We have a lot to catch up on, but let me first see the child.

Vera comes out of the bedroom with the baby.

VERA: Cathy, come and see my carbon print.

DAYA: Don't mind her. She so desperately wished to see the child resemble her that she believes he does.

CATHERINE *(taking the child):* Hey, little boy. Vera, this is not much your carbon print than he is mine.

DAYA *(to Vera:):* See, I told you.

TWO YEARS LATER....

SCENE 40

Catherine's residence.

Catherine watches television. There's a knock on the door.

She opens the door and gasps.

CATHERINE: Stan!

STAN: Kate.

CATHERINE: What are you doing here!?

STAN: I just want to say I'm sorry for all the hurt I caused you.

CATHERINE: That was three years ago. I'd forgiven you.

STAN: Can I come in? I want us to talk.

CATHERINE: Absolutely, no. I don't have anything to discuss with you.

Catherine shuts the door but remains standing behind it, breathing heavily.

SCENE 41

The Daya's home. Evening.

Daya is playing with his 2-year-old baby boy. Pregnant Vera is setting the dining table

The doorbell rings. Catherine comes in.

VERA: Welcome. Just on time.

CATHERINE: My dear, I have no time for food. Guess who was just at my place?

VERA: Stan.

CATHERINE: You knew it? Vera, you sent him to me again? Again!?

VERA: No, I can't do such a thing. Sit down.

Vera comes and sits beside her friend on the sofa.

VERA: Listen, he suddenly appeared here too. Said he had gone to MIF to see me but heard I no longer work there, so he inquired and found our home.

I was shocked when he said he wanted to see you. When I told him I won't do such a thing as direct him to you, he said he was going to find you, and left.

CATHERINE: What happened?

VERA: I don't know. It appears he didn't get married to Christy. Or maybe they got divorced.

CATHERINE: And he's coming back to pick Catherine from where he dumped her, isn't it?

VERA: Don't worry, dear. Let him know you're not the same Catherine he knew before.

DAYA: What did he tell you?

CATHERINE: I didn't allow him to talk. I was so stunned I shut the door on him.

DAYA: What if he wants you back?

CATHERINE: Doc, that's humiliating.

SCENE 42

Catherine's residence. Evening.

Stan knocks and comes in.

CATHERINE: Stan, what do you want?

STAN: Please, hear me out.

After hesitating, Catherine motions him to a seat.

STAN: While in her final year in the university, Christy was double dating. Besides me, there was also another guy from Great Soppo, Buea. It appeared the guy's mother didn't want a *graffi* for daughter-in-law.

From what I learned, Christy feared for the future of the relationship. That's why she came back to me. Unfortunately for me, when I reconciled with her, the other guy's mother suddenly approved of their relationship. So she dropped me again.

Silence.

STAN: So I just coped with it the way I could. It was so painful. Kate, I understand what you went through.

Silence.

STAN: God helped me to truly move on. These three years, I haven't been into any relationship. I just wanted to take my time and to draw closer to the Lord. I'd been a Christian for more than five years, but my relationship with the Lord was too shallow.

Silence.

STAN: Recently, I started thinking about marriage, and...I think only of you. I think part of it was the desire to tell you how sorry I was. My experience made me feel the pain I caused you.

But after much prayer, and a bit of stalking you on social media – to be sure you are not yet married – Kate, I truly believe you are the one for me. If you would give me another chance, I want to settle down with you. Things will be different this time around. For real.

SCENE 43

The Daya's home. Evening.

DAYA: Cathy, we understand your situation and join you in prayers.

CATHERINE: It's hard for me to consider him. The memories are bitter. Not like I have grudges against him, but I find it hard accepting him back. *(To Vera:)* What do you think?

VERA: If I were in your shoes, I'd probably be confused, too. But I'm also thinking of the possibility that he is genuinely changed. It's been three years. He could have gone to someone else, but he chose to come back to you. I saw a different Stan the other day.

DAYA: We have your back.

VERA: Also, consider that you've desired a change of environment.

CATHERINE: Meaning?

SCENE 44

Inside a hall. Daylight hours.

Some youths are hanging placards on the walls. Others are seated on white plastic chairs in two columns.

Catherine stands beside the table in the center of the platform, bringing out items from a box. A months' old baby lies in a small crib beside the table.

*On the table, among other books and objects, lies *Christian Dating and Courtship*, with co-authors Catherine and Stan Ngu.*

Stan comes in with a box, which is received by some of the youths. He goes up to the platform where Catherine is.

STAN: Hey, honey, I'm so sorry for the delay. The guys at the shop had problems receiving from the warehouse.

CATHERINE: Good thing, the place is still being set up.

STAN: Yeah. I was kinda relieved finding it like this. I had learned patience the hard way.

Catherine giggles.

END

APPENDIX ONE: Tips on How to Heal From a Painful Breakup with Maturity

Some years ago, tears gushed down my recently blossomed cheeks. My life had come to an end. My dreams of a happily ever had been dashed by circumstances I couldn't control. There was no purpose for which to live again. What could be worse than a painful breakup?

Working in the pharmacy one evening, I eyed the container of formaldehyde and wished I had enough effrontery to drink an ounce of the deadly liquid.

Thank God, the fear of going to hell restrained me.

I would think, "If I could rewind the hand of time." I would fix some things. I would be more cautious. I would hold my tongue. I would say this or that. I would love more.

But since I couldn't rewind the hand of time, I had to endure the painful breakup. Month after month, pain, guilt, and regret tortured me. I smiled painfully amid companions, but in private, I was a vegetable.

Many times, depression and despair pulled me down into their dark and dirty gutters. I hated myself. I was mad at God.

Then one day, light began to shine. I looked at the situation squarely and chose to heal.

I still remember how it felt. Soothing. I was taking a giant step. I was letting go of the past to embrace the future. I'd never prayed for a painful breakup, I'd never believed I could experience breakup it as a Christian, but I'd been hit hard.

Nevertheless, I could heal. Yes, I could accept my mistakes and benefit from the situation. You know, a painful breakup can have its benefits. I wouldn't be what I am today without that breakup. I don't believe God occasioned it, but I thank him for the lessons learned.

Painful breakup is not the end of life.

This is the first truth you must hold onto. One reason breakup is painful is that we exaggerate our understanding of it. Our minds are so burdened with dark clouds that we rarely believe the sun would shine again.

That pain you feel at the moment, years from now, you would laugh at it. You would wonder why you thought your world had crumbled.

Why is the breakup so painful?

Stop for a moment and answer the question. Why are you grieving?

The probability is that your answer is not a good one.

"I can't live without him or her." Sobs and blows the nose.

"I'd flaunted the relationship. What would my friends think?" More sobs.

"I may never find love again." Boohoos.

"God told me we were meant to be." Confusion, mingled with panic attacks.

Unearthing the reason for your pain is a step in facing the breakup the right way.

Let God comfort you.

No friend or acquaintance or anything else can comfort you as God can.

I wish I knew this. Instead of running to God, I ran from him. Part of it was because I had believed he told me the guy was going to be my husband. The breakup meant I had done something to spoil God's will. That was unforgivable.

The few moments I did pray, I complained and begged God to tell the guy to come back to me. I can't remember ever asking the Lord to comfort me. The only comfort I wanted was to have the man back!

It wasn't until I went back to learning about God's unconditional love and grace that I began to receive some comfort.

I saw how I'd sought validation in a relationship and placed my self-esteem in a man. I'd believed the man was the best thing ever happened. I'm ashamed to say this, but I cherished the man's love above Jesus.

When you run to God for comfort during a painful breakup, he'll show you where you went wrong, and why the breakup seems unbearable. Can you imagine desiring to kill yourself because someone walked out of your life! I wanna puke.

Jesus died for you, and you want to dishonor him by killing yourself cos a mere mortal rejected you? Hello.

Owning the relationship mistakes relieves your heart from justifying the wrong.

It also helps you become a better person. I'm stronger today because I finally accepted I had a problem with feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem.

By accept here, I mean you decide to do something about it. Mere acknowledgment won't solve the problem. You would just carry it over to the next relationship.

The mistakes don't have to be yours only. If your partner wasn't a saint, don't excuse him. Don't blame yourself alone when the fault was mutual. Don't swallow the responsibility if the other party caused the breakup.

For us women, many, many, many of us tolerate nonsense in relationships. How better can one shout this? We're the ones who cling unto a relationship as though it were a matter of life and death.

We don't believe we can meet someone else if we let go of the present relationship. We don't think our lives can be better without that person.

That's why we condone their bad habits, we ignore relationship red flags, that's why we sweep faults under the rug. "Let's just get married, and everything will fall into place."

When God shows us mercy by occasioning a breakup, we get mad at him. Many a Christian sister has gone wayward for a season after a painful breakup they didn't cause.

You can be happy after a painful breakup

This statement doesn't sound true at the moment of pain, but it is, nonetheless. Even if you caused the breakup, you can still be happy. It takes maturity and leads to more maturity. Own your mistakes. Grow up. God still loves you no matter what you've done or what has been done against you.

God alone is the source of your joy. If you let him comfort you, you would learn the lessons this experience teaches you. You can never be the same again, you can never be less.

One thing I resolved to do after healing from my painful breakup was to boldly pursue my passion.

I'd been willing to bury it to accommodate a man, but when God opened my eyes to the truth that he alone is my life and joy, I determined I was going to pursue his purpose for me. That has been a source of strength and joy.

A painful breakup could be just what you need to refocus. If you had ended up with that person, you might never fulfill God's unique purpose for your life. You would live another person's life. And be unhappy.

Should I tell you something you probably have never heard? Come closer, let me whisper into your ear.

"Many people are unhappily married. Many singles are happily single. Many singles are living purposeful lives, preparing for lifelong enjoyable marriages."

Someone walked out of your life? Wonderful! You can meet someone more awesome. You caused the breakup by a bad attitude? Excellent! You can learn and grow. Work on yourself.

You don't have to kill yourself. You don't have to grieve forever. Like it's been said, any mess can create a message.

Occupying yourself during a painful breakup leaves not much room for grief.

The pain of a breakup can be amplified if all you do is seek opportunities to be alone so you can mourn the life you've missed.

There are a thousand and one things you can do to distract yourself. Great ones, as well as pure entertainment, to wave away the temptation to beat yourself up or attempt to beg the person who left you to come back.

If I were to experience a breakup today, besides seeking comfort from the Lord, I would head to Amazon and load my kindle with good books! Fiction and non-fiction. If you don't have money, you can always find hundreds of free ebooks.

What can you do besides grieving? Think. Write down ideas for projects you could engage in. Drown that pain. Tie a rope around its neck and hang it. It's not the end of life. It could just be the beginning.

God loves YOU.

APPENDIX TWO: Things You Should Never do During a Painful Breakup

Heartbreak from a painful breakup is a torturous moment. Healing can be difficult. I've been there, an experience I wrote about in this post: [Healing from a painful breakup with maturity.](#)

It's a waste of time grieving in the wrong way. But you can grieve the right way and harvest the benefits of a painful breakup.

Calling or texting your ex only hurts you.

What do people suffering heartbreak hope to gain from this exercise? Think about it for a moment. What? Nothing. Instead, you worsen the pain.

I know the darkness that accompanies not calling or texting your ex. You see a glimmer of hope with each urge to call or text them.

"I might say something that'll convince them to come back to me."

"He may finally listen to my begging."

The urge is irresistible.

But you only delay your healing by trying to reconnect. If they pick your call or reply to your message, chances are they would say something awful.

"Stop calling me!"

"I'm not coming back to you!"

Even the refusal to pick your calls or the ignoring of your messages is profoundly hurting. You don't need that. Swallow the present pain and become a stronger person.

Your heart hurts each time you check your phone.

Sorry, honey, they won't call or text you. While you're pining for them, they're probably having the time of their life, with no room for you. They may already be in another relationship. The calls or text you await are being sent to the new lover.

If you can't resist the temptation to check your phone, switch it off or change your number. Hard. But it's tight. And it will do you a lot of good.

Much pain during breakup results from untamed emotions and desires. You can resist the urge. Yes, you can. It's not easy, but it's doable. Find something else to do. Pray and ask the Lord for grace. Talk to a compassionate friend. Read a book.

The desire to check your phone or call them is like an addiction. After a certain period of denying it gratification, you gain more strength over them, and they lose their appeal and power over you.

Stalking your ex on social media exacerbates the pain of the breakup.

They're not whining on their walls. No moans. No hints of a breakup. No subliminal attacks on you. Nothing. They may be posting things entirely unrelated to relationships.

Maybe politics, academics, etc. Signs that they've moved on. Why can't you move on, too?

Block them if you can't resist the urge. The decision to stalk them will require extra steps of unblocking, and by then, you may have a rethink about the decision.

Your prayers won't bring your ex back. Rather worship God.

It's not a lack of prayers that sent them away. Don't even believe it was the devil that separated you two. A YUGE majority of problems in the Christian life, including heartbreak or breakup, are not caused by demons. They're mostly self-inflicted or natural consequences of human relationships, because, yeah, we're humans and interpersonal relationship is hard.

Instead of begging God to reunite you, instead of binding unknown demons, worship God. Take stock of the just-ended relationship and see where personal change is necessary. Learn from it and move on.

God does restore relationships, but they work better when you've healed and allowed the unfolding to come naturally.

A new relationship is not the best solution during a painful breakup.

Rushing into a new relationship immediately after a painful breakup is a sign of a deeper problem. You can't handle your emptiness. You don't even know the purpose of relationships. You're merely seeking a band-aid for your wounded heart.

Friend, you need healing, not cosmetic solutions.

During a breakup, you're vulnerable. You may accept someone who's not the right fit and set your heart up for more pain. You may fall victim to vices you'd later regret, especially if your new partner takes advantage of your vulnerability.

Running down your ex brings relief. But it's short term.

When you've failed to have the relationship back, it's easier to seek comfort in badmouthing your ex. Bad habits and flaws you'd once ignored now make headlines in your gossip circles.

While it may be helpful to reveal these things, because they actually help you acknowledge your previous willful ignorance, doing it in a bad way fertilizes bitterness and resentment in your heart. It hurts you more than it hurts that person whose image you want to mar.

Let the Lord help you to forgive.

Never attack your ex's new lover!

You've been dumped for someone else? It's not their fault. Even if they snatched your ex from you, don't attack them. Why? Because it won't bring your ex back. Plus, it'll give you a bad name and at least one new enemy.

A painful breakup can be deeply torturous. What you do or don't do can exacerbate the pain. Heal the right way and become a better you.

Jesus loves you.

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