



ROSES FOR VALENTINE

A CHRISTIAN ROMANCE NOVELETTE



E. C. HANNAH

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A Christian Romance Novellette

E. C. HANNAH

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*To the **lovers** and the **loved**.*



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CHAPTER *ONE*

Mena

Perhaps it was because I knew nothing would ever happen between us... That must be the reason why I was blatantly ogling my younger brother, oh sorry, not my younger brother but it almost seemed like he was. Tife Ajibade was the younger brother to my best friend of over thirteen years – Lola Ajibade. We had practically spent our teenage years in each other's arms and till date, we are best of friends. That reminds me, she was seated right next to me and here I was ogling her younger brother who was a 'whole' three years younger.

“How low can you get, Mena?” I thought to myself. I'm certain it doesn't get any lower than this. This must be Jason's fault. That guy is a Yoruba demon. Oops!

“Sorry, Lord. I'm not supposed to insult people as a Christian.”

I breathed in and calmed my raging heart. Jason and I started dating in October 2022. I had the uncanny feeling that he was not all he made himself out to be but I ignored it because I was lonely and I just wanted somebody to call mine.

“Yeah, laugh on people. Laugh at lonely, pathetic Mena,” I rolled my eyes. Anyway, let's continue with the story. Jason broke up with me on the 2nd of February this year – 2023. Can you imagine? Just when the whole world was

set to celebrate Valentine, my boyfriend, (sorry I've got to use spiritual parlance). My 'fiance' broke up with me! It would have been less painful if I hadn't heard him talking to his friend, Femi, on the phone while walking out of the restaurant where he had unceremoniously broken up with me.

He was saying he had finally broken up with the fat one to avoid Valentine billings and he is left alone with the curvy figure eight lady waiting for him at his apartment. Boy, was I stunned! Curvy figure eight? Fat one? I have never 'billed' anyone for anything! Yes, I enjoyed life – I had tons of clothes and accessories but I was well-paid and my father was well-to-do. How could he have conceived the idea that I would bill him for Valentine?

Men and brethren, only the grace of God kept me from using my 4-inch block heels to break his *kokolo* head.

Language, young lady.

“Sorry, dear Holy Spirit. But you know some people deserve it.”

See your beautiful mouth like ‘Some people deserve it. Didn't I tell you not to go into that relationship?’

“Yeah, You did but...Aaargh!” I groaned inwardly. “When will my own handsome *bobo* come? Look at Lola,

she'll be getting married in two months and I'm here at 29, single and all alone. Plus, it's two days to Valentine."

Patience, dear one.

"Okay. Okay. I'll trust You," I sniffed and wiped a stray tear from my cheek.

"Are you okay?" Lola turned in my direction.

Oh my God. Men and brethren, I had totally forgotten that I was in church. I was at the Relationship Meet for singles and unmarried people in my denomination's headquarters and I had veered off thinking about men and relationships. You cannot blame me though. All these talk of love was messing with my brain. And Tife looking so fine and delectable was making me lose my mind.

King of Israel, did I, Mena, the saved, sanctified and Spirit-filled daughter of God just refer to someone as 'delectable'? *Lobatan!* It is finished.

"Mena", Lola called again, more insistently this time. "Are you okay? You seem off..."

"I'm okay," I whispered and then, before I could help myself, I blurted out, "When did Tife return?"

"The day before yesterday. He said he just wanted to see us and rest a bit. You know his work is taxing," Lola responded.

“What does he do again? I know he’s an engineer but other than that, I know nothing.”

“He’s a reservoir engineer. They are in charge of finding oil in rocks and designing ways to drill the oil blah blah blah.”

“That sounds important,” I muttered and turned to face the stage where Tife was standing with Pastor Eric, explaining his lessons from ‘Booless Bundle’ by Allison Hyacintho and how he took his singlehood seriously to bring God glory.

I looked at him in the black ‘senator’ outfit and all-white sneakers and sighed. “Holy Spirit, You are not making this easy at all.” It seemed I heard a chuckle. “Nice one, Holy Spirit. It’s nice to know the Divine Being is having so much fun at my expense,” I smiled.

Relax. Your husband is coming.

“When?”

Soon.

“How soon?”

Sooner than you think.

“Okay. *Sha* remove this anyhow crush for Tife that just started. I don’t have to feel weird around my younger brother.”

He’s not your younger brother.

“Aaargh! You know what I mean.”

(Chuckle) Concentrate on the meeting, young lady.

“Yes, sir.” I smiled. I loved my relationship with the Holy Spirit. If only I listened to Him all the time, I’d have been saved from a lot of heartache. This time though, I planned to listen to Him completely. I couldn’t afford to waste time like I had done with Jason for four months and eighteen months with Godstime long before Jason came. I was ready to wait on God for my husband. I just needed to get rid of this ‘new-found’ crush for Tife. Thank God he had finally finished his short talk. Pastor Eric invited Peter, a brother in the choir who was to be married the next weekend to talk about his courtship journey. I brought out my jotter and tried to focus. I didn’t come to the Relationship Meet to be absent minded.

CHAPTER *TWO*

Tife

“Sometimes, when you meet the one, you’ll just know. There will be an instant realization that you’ve reached your final bus stop. Some other times, it’s a gradual realization. It takes some people time before they realize that the one they’ve been waiting for all their lives is someone who has been right before their eyes,” Pastor Eric’s voice floated in my mind as I helped my mum do the dishes.

For me, it was a little of both but more of the latter. The first time I saw Efemena, my sister’s friend, I was a little above twelve years of age. She was almost sixteen but she was so beautiful. She had this chubby, teddy-bear physique, smooth face and expressive eyes. I think that was when I fell in love. No one noticed it except my elder brother, Lanre, and he dismissed it as a childhood crush.

I laughed. When that supposed childhood crush lasted till I was 22, I knew I was in trouble. I went back to Lanre to spill and he advised me to keep it to myself and pray seriously about it. That was what I had been doing for the past four years – keeping it to myself and praying about it. It was time to make my move now. Getting the go-ahead from God had been one of the highlights of my 2022 and I couldn’t wait to finally confess my feelings to Mena.

I had spent the last four years avoiding her altogether. I feared if I was in the same space with her, I'd blurt out my feelings in a heartbeat. Thank God I had gotten a job at Warri immediately after my service year at Rivers State. I've been working and building myself in all areas. Sometimes, I still felt a bit of fear. Fear that Mena would reject me because I was younger but each time that happened, the Holy Spirit would reassure me.

I smiled as I recalled her look at the Relationship Meet the previous day. Later that night during my devotion, I literally had to shout. "God, You do this one! She fine wella! You finish work when You create am." Mena dressed in a long-sleeved vintage shirt with orange and black as the prominent colours and paired it with a plain orange skirt. The bold orange colour complimented her dark skin and I could only mutter to myself, "See my woman." It didn't matter if she wasn't officially mine till I proposed and she accepted. Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things unseen. I chuckled to myself.

"Tife!"

I jumped and turned around. "Lola, you're back from work? Welcome."

She folded her arms and looked at me.

"Why were you shouting?" I asked.

“I should be asking you why you were so absent minded that you didn’t see me come in and you didn’t hear when I called your name. And why is the tap running?”

I turned around quickly and turned off the tap. I must have really been absent-minded because the two plates left in the sink were thoroughly rinsed yet the water had been running non-stop. I turned to face Lola.

“How was work?”

“Mmm Mmmm...you are not getting out of this so easily. Why were you smiling to yourself?” She laughed. “You should’ve seen your face, Tife. I wish I had taken a picture.”

“Ha Ha Ha,” I let out a mock laugh. “Forget it, Lola. It’s over now.”

She walked to the door and turned. “It’s Mena, isn’t it? Correct me if I’m wrong.”

I don’t think a fly would have found it difficult to make its way into my mouth then if there was any in the kitchen. My jaw was on the floor!

“I thought as much,” she continued.

I finally managed to close my mouth. “How...how did you know?”

“I’m a girl. I have eyes, you know? Plus, Lanre spilled.”

“I knew it. He should’ve...”

“Don’t blame him. He was only looking out for you.”

I nodded.

“Do Mum and Dad know? Are you sure you want to do this?” She asked.

I looked at her and I just knew she was aware that I was about to propose to her friend. Everyone in my home had adept intuitions. Again, I nodded. “I’ve spoken with Mum and Dad. I also talked to Pastor Eric yesterday.”

Lola smiled. “Look whose baby brother is about to get a fiancée.”

I smiled. “You know you can say younger brother, right? I’m not a baby anymore.”

“It doesn’t matter. You’ll always be my baby brother,” she laughed.

I shook my head and smiled. “I’ll need your help with Mena though.”

“Say the word and I’m on it.”

CHAPTER THREE

Mena

I hissed and threw the phone on the sofa. It was Valentine's eve and social media was filled with red and white themes, businesses were offering Valentine packages and everyone was talking about Valentine! Can't y'all talk about other things? Election is coming. Talk about election. I retrieved the phone and moved to Instagram.

"Why do you like torturing yourself?" I asked aloud. I was sprawled on the tiled floor in the sitting room area of my small, quaint apartment. I shook my head and kept scrolling.

"Valentine, Valentine, Valentine...just great. *Olopa ma ko everybody las las*, especially those couples oppressing the single pringles like me," I muttered.

Dear one.

"I'm sorry Holy Spirit. Language, I know."

Come away with Me.

"What? Now? Serious serious?"

Come away with Me.

"Ah. Okay," I quickly went offline and dropped the phone on the sofa. I went into the bedroom to pick up my Bible,

journal and pen. I sat on the floor with my back to the sofa and just worshipped. In a few minutes, I felt the presence of God so strong that I laid on the floor face-down and groaned aloud.

“Jehovah, You are good. You are kind. It’s me and You, both now and in eternity. I love You. Aargh! Legezende Sambayatu...There is none like You. Thank You for You.”

After a while, I retrieved my phone and pressed play on my chant playlist. The first one that came on was Lawrence Oyor’s ‘You are my obsession’. I cried as I chanted the words, “You are my heart’s desire. You are my one addiction. Only You, only You.”

I realized that the desire for a husband, loneliness and social media pressure had pushed me into premature relationships. It was time to focus on God till He gave me the desires of His heart.

“Oh Lord, I’m sorry. Here am I, I come to You. I surrender anew. Nothing between, only You Jesus. Ah, my obsession is You. My addiction is You.”

He’s here.

“Who is here?” I asked amidst worship.

The One. He’s here.

“Holy Spirit please, don’t play games with me. I’m worshipping here.” I promptly sang along with the next line of Lawrence Oyor’s song, “Till I die, only You. Till we meet, only You. Only Youuuu. Only You I love.”

I know there’s Me (chuckle). There’s him as well.

“What?”

Write down the things which shall be.

I quickly sat up and grabbed my journal

First child – Tolulope.

“Another Yoruba dem...sorry for interrupting. I’ll take anyone You give.”

Second – Donald.

“Mmm hmm?”

That’s all.

“Only two?”

You both will live in Port Harcourt for a while. Later, Abuja.

“But I...”

My phone started ringing and I groaned. “Who is this interrupting...oh, it’s Lola.”

Pick the call.

I picked. “Hello Lola.”

“Hey babe. How far?”

“I’m good. What’s up?”

“Everything’s cool. Are you free tomorrow evening?”

I laughed. “Please Lola, don’t mock my single status. You know I’m free. I’m not hoping for a romantic dinner like you that has *bobo*.”

“Good. I need you to be at White Orchid Restaurant tomorrow by 7pm please.”

“Ah ah, what’s happening? Why...”

Go.

“Okay, I’ll be there.”

“Great. Love you, babes. See you.”

“Holy Spirit, what’s going on?”

Wait and see the salvation of the Lord.

CHAPTER *FOUR*

Tife

I pulled up outside Mena's compound gate and stepped out. Lola had given me directions. Lola had also helped out with other minor details. I was grateful to that sister of mine. I was most grateful to God though for the gift of Mena.

“Thank You again, God.”

You are welcome, son. Go get your girl.

I rang the door bell and I heard her yell, “I'm coming!”

In a few seconds, she opened the door and my breath hitched. I saw the emotions flash through her face in a heartbeat. Surprise, pleasure, then surprise again.

“Hi. Tife, what are you doing here?” She sounded breathless.

“Good evening.”

“Good evening. You can come in.” She left the door open and strolled in after me. “You can sit,” she waved to a single chair. The sofa was filled with powder, head ties, a few clothes and some other stuff.

She saw where my eyes had gone to and looked a bit embarrassed. “Sorry, I'm not usually like this. It's just that

your sister invited me for this ‘thing’ and I was confused on what to wear for a while.”

“It’s okay,” I chuckled. She looked cute.

“Do you want something to munch? Drink?”

“Nah...I’m good.”

“Okay. So, why are you here? I’ll have to leave in the next thirty minutes. As you can see, I’ve worn my dress. What’s left are my shoes and...”

“Yeah, I know you’re going somewhere. I’m to take you there.”

“Ha,” She breathed deeply. “Lola is such a darling. She sent you to pick me up, didn’t she?”

“Eeerhm...something like that.”

“Ah Tife, you will never change. You’ve come back again with your cryptic way of talking. *Abeg*, let me get my shoes. Make yourself comfortable,” she said as she walked to what I thought must be the bedroom.

I laughed aloud. God, this lady has not lost her charm. Mena has always been the one with the bubbly personality. She was lovely like that.

She hurried out of the room and held up two wigs in both hands, “This or this?” she asked, making eyes at both.

“Definitely this,” I pointed at the long-braided wig on her right. “The black colour fits the dress.” She was on a knee-length lemon-green dress. I liked the fact that she was not overly consumed with the Valentine hullabaloo. Everywhere in town, people were dressed in red. At least, we’ll be different. I was on a white T-shirt with ash blazer and black chinos trousers with matching ash-coloured sneakers. I wasn’t so much in tune with the Valentine colour code either. She went inside the room again.

“Alright, I’m ready. Come and snap me pictures *abeg*.” She hurried out of the room with a black purse and black heels. Holy God, this woman is ho...beautiful. I stood up and took her phone from her. Her fingers touched mine and I felt a jolt. I was certain she felt it too because I heard her gasp. I swallowed and said, “I think the picture will look great outside.”

“Okay.”

I walked outside and waited while she shut the door and locked it. “Okay, I’m ready,” she said, turning to face me.

“Strike a pose right there,” I held up the phone and took some shots. “Yes? Perfect. Another one? Uhn uhn. Got it. Move to this side.”

“If these pictures are not fine ehn... after all the stress you’re putting me through...” She joked.

I laughed. “Trust me, they are beautiful. Just like you.” I snapped the final one and handed her the phone. She looked at me for a second and then, at her wristwatch.

“6.42! Lola will kill me. Let’s go *abeg*.”

I laughed and led her to my car. She has no idea. “*No too run abeg. Make your heels no go break.*”

“Oh my God!” She exclaimed as I opened the passenger door for her to step in. “I forgot you are now a confirmed *wafi* boy. You’ve gone to learn our Warri pidgin.” I laughed as I closed the car door and went round to the other side. It’s show time.

We joked and laughed on our way. I kept her so engaged that she didn’t notice I had veered off till I pulled up at a restaurant. She laughed at what I said just before I stopped and looked around.

“Tife, this is not White Orchid Restaurant.”

“I know,” I breathed.

“What’s going on?” She looked puzzled. “Lola said...”

“We decided to change the venue.”

“You and Lola?”

“Hmmm...” I stepped out and walked to the other side to open her door and let her out. “Let’s go.”

We walked in and were ushered to a seat. I pulled out a chair and she took her seat.

“Where is Lola now?” She made as if to dial her number. “You know, I actually assumed this was a double date or something...that her fiance, Ade was coming with one of his friends...”

“It was actually or it was supposed to be one. Lola and Ade are back at White Orchid,” I said. “Do you want anything to drink?”

“Tife,” she dropped her phone and purse on the table. “When you said ‘We decided to change the venue’, who were you talking about?”

“The Holy Spirit and I.”

“What’s going on?”

“Hmmm,” I licked my suddenly dry lips. “I’m sorry I’ve not been completely honest with you but this is it – Efemena Akpovona, I’m in love with you, wholeheartedly in love with you.”

“What?” She sputtered. “If this is a joke, Tife, stop it. I’m older than you,” she whispered. “Three years older.”

“I know. I also know that I’ve loved you since I was almost thirteen, even before I knew what love is. I know that I’ve prayed about you and for you so many times than

I can count. I know you're all I want in a woman and that our two children – Tolu and Donald will love you.”

She gasped.

I pushed my chair backwards and went on one knee before her. “I know you are the first person I want to talk to when good things happen but I’ve restrained myself for so long.” I chuckled. “Do you know I got a promotion last week and I’ll be moved to Port-Harcourt as a director but I’ve not told anyone yet. I wanted you to be the first to know.”

I saw a tear fall from her left eye and I reached forward to wipe it off. “Marry me, Efe. Share my hopes and dreams with me. You are all...”

I stopped short as she lunged at me and hugged me tight.

I blinked. I still felt her arms around my neck and she was sobbing quietly.

What just happened?

I just happened. I went before you.

I smiled. “Thank You God.”

“It’s okay, babe. It’s okay. Stop crying.” I rubbed her arms and reveled in the happy feeling of requited love.

“Where have you been?” She muttered. “Why didn’t you come earlier?”

“I needed to make sure. And I needed to grow.” I pulled her away to look into her eyes. She blushed and looked down. “Nah...look at me, beautiful,” I raised her head gently with my hands. “I love you.”

“I love you too, Tife.”

I smiled. “Happy Valentine.”

“Happy Valentine’s Day to you too,” my queen replied.

“I don’t suppose you’ll want to see the trunk of my car?” I stood up and took my seat.

“Tife, what did you do?” She asked.

I grinned. “I ordered a ‘boot-load’ of roses.”

I took pleasure in watching my woman burst into laughter. Her face lit up and she had never looked more beautiful.

THE END

GLOSSARY

1. *Yoruba demon* – Guys from the Yoruba tribe who toy with the emotions of females.
2. *Bobo* – Boyfriend/Fiance.
3. *Kokolo* – Strong and big.
4. *Lobatan* – It is finished.
5. *Olopa ma ko everybody* – Police will carry everybody (used as a joke in local parlance).
6. *Nah* – No.
7. *Single pringle* – Not in a relationship.
8. *Abeg* – Please.
9. *Wafi* – Warri.
10. *No too run abeg*. Make your heels no go break. – Don't run, so your heels won't break.
11. *She fine wella!* You finish work when You create am - She's so beautiful. You did very well when you created her.

ALSO, BY E. C. HANNAH

1. Thoughts of the Redeemed; An Anthology of Poems
2. LOST; Finding the Way Home
3. Intertwined 1; In Love with A Pastor
4. El Amor; My Valentine
5. Hadizat; A Tale of Mercy
6. A Seal Upon My Heart; An Anthology of Poems
7. Tell Me Again Why You Love Me

ABOUT THE BOOK

This is the second time I'm offering a Valentine's Day gift to my audience. I don't know if this is going to be an annual occurrence so, enjoy it while it lasts. I thought to do a little spin around a love story that'll be short enough for a Valentine's Day binge-read. I like to think I got exactly what I was aiming at with 'Roses for Valentine'. I hope you love it!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

E. C. Hannah is a multi-potentialite. She's good at a lot of things and writing happens to be one of them. She dishes out heart-warming Christian fiction novels with lovely characters and loads of lessons. You can check out her blog here - echannah.com

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Do reach out. Hannah absolutely loves hearing from her readers!