

## Pulpit Chronicles: Prey for Me

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### CHAPTER ONE

“Good morning, Sister Hatcher!” Reverend Goody proudly showed all of his teeth when he spotted the thick-legged woman standing next to the racks of bread. She spun around quickly and dramatically tossed the shiny curls of her Brazilian Remy weave back over her shoulder. A smile beamed across her face when her eyes focused on the handsome man standing in front of her. *A big sexy bald-headed brown-skinned man – ooh Lawd!* She felt the stirring in her thighs just looking at his straight white teeth with that sexy gap in the front. What a beautiful man!

Sister Hatcher – Sister Keynetha Hatcher – had to remind herself that this was the Reverend. Not some man in the club. Not some guy at her job working in the cubicle next to her calling people about their past due credit card bills. Not the mailman or the cable man or the man who cuts her grass every week. This was the *REVEREND*. She should not be standing here in the grocery store feeling...moist. This has to be a sin. She told herself that she was going to get on her knees when she got home, get right on her knees and pray. Pray to the heavens with her loudest voice, like the Reverend told them to do at church on Sunday. She was going to read her bible and pray as hard as possible for the Lord to forgive her for her dirty thoughts about the Reverend.

The Reverend stepped closer and closer and Sister Keynetha’s knees felt weak as he leaned toward her. Is he about to...kiss me?

The Reverend gently touched the side of his face to hers and patted her on her back in a brief but friendly hug. He released the hug and pulled back to look into her face.

“How are you, Sister Hatcher? I missed you at church last Sunday – is everything okay at home?” He was staring into her eyes so deeply that her legs felt like butter. She couldn’t lie to him but she couldn’t tell him that she had stayed out late Saturday night drinking with her girls and she had a massive headache on Sunday morning. There was no way she could make it to church, besides, she didn’t wake up until 3:00 that afternoon and services were already over.

“Oh, no, everything’s fine at home – I just had a late night and I wasn’t feeling too good on Sunday morning,” said Keynetha. She had to break away from the Reverend’s stare because it was making her feel self-conscious – and turning her on. Those deep dark eyes and thick black eyebrows, with his Jamie Foxx-looking ass. Made no sense for him to be a man of God, she thought, because she could think of a lot of things she could do to this fine man. She reached for a loaf of bread from the rack and pretended to read the label.

“I hope you’re feeling better,” said the Reverend. “You should have called the church and left a message if you needed me to make a house call....and pray with you.”

*Was he flirting back?* Keynetha’s head was spinning. *He better leave me alone before I drop to my knees and go to work on this muthafucka!* She laughed at herself as she wondered if he could hear her thoughts. Of course he couldn’t, but the idea tickled her. But again – *was he flirting back?*

“Thank you, Reverend, I’m fine now, I think I just needed more rest. I should be there next Sunday for sure!”

The Reverend smiled at her and licked his lips. *Yup, he’s definitely sending me some vibes right now, I’m not imagining it!*

“Good to hear, Sister Hatcher,” he said. “There’s an Usher Board meeting Wednesday night and we’re short a few ushers since the Campbell family moved to Chicago. They had three daughters on the usher board, you know.”

*I’ll be your usher,* Keynetha said to herself. *Whatchu gonna give me for it?*

“That’s right,” she said, “I forgot about that – that was a big family! Our choir is short like six people now since they moved!”

Reverend Goody laughed heartily, his eyes twinkling. “You’re right. Guess I need to do some heavy recruiting to fill in all of the gaps!”

“What time is the usher board meeting? My godmother is on the usher board and she’s been trying to get me to join. I think I’ll come and see where I can help out.”

“It’s at 6:00. Come on by and join. We could use the help. Seems like we got a lot of new members since I talked to that reporter on TV a few weeks ago.”

“Yes, we sure did,” said Keynetha. “A few of my friends started coming to church just because they saw you on TV!”

This was true. Reverend Goody did a brief interview on the local news, speaking about a twelve year old neighborhood boy and church member who disappeared on his way home from school, and suddenly the church's phone lines blew up and a wave of new visitors started showing up every Sunday. It didn't go without notice that these visitors were overwhelmingly women, ranging from their early twenties to maybe mid-fifties.

They seemingly came in pairs or groups, all dressed to show off their finest features – tight clothing accentuating their round asses, short skirts to display thick brown thighs, low cut tops that barely restrained their ample breasts. They put on quite a show, shuffling around trying to get closer to the front of the church so the Reverend couldn't miss them. But the regulars and old-timers sat tight in their seats, refusing to give up their spots and give these new folks the satisfaction of being seen.

The older women turned up their lips at these new, young and sparkly women, glancing disdainfully at their long weaves and high heels as they tipped up and down the aisle looking for a place to sit.

"Okay, so that's why it's been standing room only out in the pews!" The Reverend said, smiling sheepishly. "I thought it was because Mother Waddles started baking cookies every Sunday after service!"

"Yeah, well, those cookies are the bomb!" Said Keynetha.

"Don't let me keep you, Sister Hatcher," the Reverend reached out and touched her arm, ever so slightly, in a gesture of ending their conversation but Keynetha felt his fingers linger just a bit longer than he intended. *Was it all in her mind?*

"I just wanted to let you know that I saw you – I'm picking up something to cook for dinner tonight," he said and waved toward his abandoned shopping basket at the other side of the aisle. Keynetha noticed how empty his cart looked with only a handful of items, and it reminded her that this good looking Man of God was also single and had no one to prepare him a hot meal.

She saw an opportunity and she went for it. Clearing her throat, she took a step closer and looked into Reverend Goody's face.

"You should let me make you dinner sometime, Reverend. It just doesn't seem right that you should be fixing and eating a meal by yourself when you do so much for

the church.”

He laughed that big hearty laugh again and bent over to her cart and began moving her items around. “I don’t know; let’s see what you bought here. What can I expect if I come over?”

*Oh, what I wanna give you ain’t in this basket, Reverend Theodore Goody.* Keynetha smiled as he picked up her bag of fresh collard greens in one hand and the shrink wrapped package of ham hocks in the other.

“Alright, alright, you’re off to a good start already!” he said, and then he patted the bag of whole sweet potatoes lying against the side of the basket. “Oh yes, Sister Keynetha, your basket is looking like you know your way around the kitchen!”

*I know my way around other rooms of my house too, Reverend.*

“Oh yeah, for sure, I’m a very good cook! My momma made sure I knew how to cook before I even got to middle school. I had to take over cooking for the family,” said Keynetha. “You just let me know what you want and I can make it special for you.”

The Reverend stopped rambling around in her basket, which was good because she was afraid he would move the twelve-pack of bathroom tissue at the front of the basket and expose the big shrink-wrapped container of rat poison that she was buying to take care of some unwanted guests in her home. There was a package of fresh catfish wrapped in brown paper pushed up against the bathroom tissue, and when the Reverend picked that up, Keynetha reached over and took it from his hands, making a joke to distract him and end his treasure hunt through her basket.

“Look if you’re gonna poke all around in my basket then you need to let me take a look in yours too, to make it even!”

She crossed the aisle and headed over to the Reverend’s basket which sat abandoned just a few feet away. She could hear the Reverend rushing up behind her as she approached the basket.

“What’s this – you have some grandkids, Reverend?” Keynetha reached over and slid her hand across the four boxes of juice pouches in the basket. To her surprise, the Reverend’s basket was full of snacks and treats – she saw gummy bears, some sugar-sweetened cereal with cartoon characters on the box, and several packages of cookies.

“You either have a bunch of grandkids or you’re running a daycare on the side or you have a sweet tooth that’s out of control!” Keynetha joked. The Reverend stepped between her and the basket, forcing her to move back.

“You got me, you know my secret, I do have a bad sweet tooth,” said the Reverend. “Don’t let the ladies of the congregation find out! They will be bringing me cakes and pies every Sunday!”

“You gotta watch that, Reverend, it’s funny but it makes me worry about you too. You really DO need a home-cooked meal, don’t you?” Keynetha saw a chance to make her move. *Going after the Reverend, girlllllll.*

“How about tomorrow night? I’ll make dinner and dessert – all you have to do is show up with your appetite,” she offered.

“Now we can’t get the church talking, you know how rumors get started, Sister Key,” replied the Reverend, using Keynetha’s nickname, which told her that he was getting comfortable and probably ready to crack. She couldn’t wait to get back in her car so she could tell her cousin TeeTee. She wished she could send her a cellphone pic of the two of them in the store talking. *Would it be crazy to ask the Reverend to pose for a selfie?*

“It’s okay, we all know you’re a good man, a God-fearing man, nobody would think anything impure about you, Reverend. All anyone would think is that you’re coming to sit with me in prayer or do some bible study.”

“Alright, Sister Key. If you insist. What time should I be there?”

“Six o’clock? That will give us time to eat and I really do need you to say some prayers for some of my family members after we eat. Is that okay, Reverend?”

“Of course, I’ll be there at 6. Thank you, Sister. God bless you for being so kind and thoughtful.” The Reverend put his hands on the basket handle and began to push away from her, moving down the aisle.

“Good day, Reverend,” Keynetha stood just a bit longer and watched him walk away. She was looking at his ass under the flap of his long overcoat. *Doesn’t seem fair for the Reverend to have a nice ass.*

She giggled to herself at her thoughts. *He is falling right into my trap! Once he tastes my cooking, that nigga will never go home! Wait, you can’t call the damn*

*Reverend a nigga!*

He's still a man. A bible in one hand and his dick in the other. He's still a man. Keynetha returned to her basket and continued shopping with a smile on her face. To passers-by, she might look like a crazy person, pushing the basket around the store with a huge grin on her face. She was seeing visions of her and the Reverend rolling around in her bed, naked and sweaty, the room lit only by candles.

Oh well, if she was already going to ask for forgiveness then she may as well earn it!

Reverend Goody pulled into his driveway and hit the button on the remote opener. The door pulled upwards, painfully slow, it seemed, while the Reverend tapped impatiently on the steering wheel. He wondered, did the door always roll up this slowly? Or did he just not notice before because he wasn't this nervous? He reached over and caressed his worn leather bible sitting in the passenger seat. *"Dear Father, have pity on those that seek to cause trouble, for they know not what they do."*

The garage door finally granted him entry, and he floored the pedal and rushed inside. He shut off the engine and sat in the car in the dark garage after the door went back down closing him inside. He wanted to go over the day's events, to make sure it happened the way he remembered it happening, to make sure he hadn't said the wrong thing or given the wrong signal. Sometimes the women at the church would come on so strong that he struggled with striking that delicate balance between doing the work of the Lord and being friendly and keeping the communication open so they would know they could come to him for prayer and healing – but also not to feed into their lonely desires of the flesh.

The churches were always filled with lonely desperate women looking to become the First Lady, or just get a taste of what it was like to be the First Lady, even if it was just for one night. He knew it all too well. He had to continuously pray for strength from the pleasures of the flesh; after all, he was just a man. He was simply a messenger of God and his flesh had urges like any other man. It was only by constant prayer and meditation that he was able to keep from violating so many of these women with his

urges. If they only knew how hard it was for him to fight his urges, they would be afraid. They would also be shocked to discover that his desires were not for the flesh of their thighs or the curves of their asses. They had very little to offer him outside of an alibi, but he had to keep up the appearance by keeping them aroused and trembling and daydreaming. Let them keep thinking that they had a chance; it provided him with the perfect cover for his true desires.

His urges sometimes hit him in the night like a freight train. Roaring up from the soles of his feet as he lay in bed, running up his legs and through his thighs and then striking his dick like a bolt of lightning. He remembered those days of being able to feed the urge without so much complication. It was so easy back then, before the days of the internet and cellphones. You might think those things made it easier, but no, that made it harder because of all of the tracking and digital footprints. Sure, it was easy to locate, but not so easy to hide, and a man in his position needed to hide. So he kept his desires under control the old fashioned hands-on way. He didn't go to porn sites or do online dating or get into sexting. He couldn't risk losing everything he had built by being careless again. He'd had to run before and he wasn't going to do it again.

*"The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him."*

Taking a deep breath, Reverend Good finally pulled the door handle and stepped out of his car. He reached into the back seat and removed the grocery bags of snacks. The weight of the treats was heavy in his hand and made him smile because he anticipated the joy the treats would bring, and how he might be rewarded for bringing them.

He entered the kitchen through the garage and put the bags on the counter, then reached in and pulled out one box of the juice pouches. He took out two pouches and applied the straws, making them ready to drink. Sitting the pouches on the counter, he took a paper plate from the cabinet and laid it next to the juices, then removed four of the sandwich cookies and placed them on the plate. Pulling open the kitchen drawer, he took out a marker and wrote on each plate, "God loves you. And so do I."

He assembled the juice pouches on the plate, looked at his work and smiled. He knew this was pleasing to the Lord because at that moment he felt strong and in

control and the blood was rushing through his veins because he was excited. The excitement caused his dick to harden and he wasn't ashamed because he knew he was going to be rewarded soon for his dedication and unwavering service.

The door to the basement was just a few steps away from the countertop but he needed the keys to unlock the three deadbolts, so he retrieved the keys from the bottom of the planter in the living room, then returned and matched the keys up with each lock, grinning as he heard the familiar and satisfying *clunk* of each key releasing its lock.

Reverend Goody pulled the chain to the light at the top of the stairs and headed down, holding the plate in one hand and keeping himself steady with the rail in the other.

At the bottom of the stairs, he pulled another chain to light up another short hallway, at the end of which was another door to the storage closet. His heart was beating fast and beads of sweat broke out on his forehead.

He prayed to the Lord to help him make his decision. *I want to do what is pleasing to you, Lord.* He heard a noise from behind the door and he smiled, recognizing that that was his signal to continue as always.

He turned the doorknob and entered the storage closet, pulling the chain to turn on the lightbulb in the ceiling.

The boy hid his face under the blanket when the light filled the tiny room. The light hurt his eyes because he only saw it once a day, or once a night; he didn't know anymore whether it was day or night. He just knew that he only saw the light bulb turn on when the Reverend came in the room. He wasn't able to turn it on himself because a bright orange mesh belt tied him tightly to the bed rails and kept him from moving too far away from his bed. It was crudely twisted over itself into a knot, then wrapped around his ankle and secured with a padlock, with just enough length to allow him to reach the waste bucket on the other side of the room. Other times – if he was good – the Reverend took him upstairs to the bathroom and allowed him to soak in a bubble bath and watch 30 minutes of television – only if he was really good.

He wanted to be good again, but sometimes it was hard not to fight back. Even when he knew it would end with him being hurt really bad by the Reverend's fists. He was learning quickly what was acceptable to his captor and what was not; what would

earn him rewards and what would earn him beatings. His will to survive kicked in the first night he woke up in this dark place, and he was determined to stay alive until someone rescued him and ended this nightmare.

Reverend Goody approached the bed with the plate in front of him like a peace offering. His big bright smile was sickening in the context of where they were.

“I told you I would bring you a surprise tonight,” said the Reverend, loosening his belt as he got closer to the bed. The boy grabbed for the cookie, he was starving.

“No!” The Reverend snatched the plate back out of his reach. “You know you have to pray before you eat. Don’t be bad or I’ll have to hurt you again.”

The boy bowed his head and went through the motions of the prayer that the Reverend had taught him. The Reverend smiled as he listened to him say the words that he wanted to hear, the words that reassured him that he was doing the right thing.