

REV·E·LA·TION /ˌREVəˈLāSH(ə)N/ NOUN

A SURPRISING AND PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN FACT, ESPECIALLY ONE THAT IS MADE KNOWN IN A
DRAMATIC WAY.



**“FOR NOTHING IS SECRET THAT WILL NOT BE REVEALED, NOR ANYTHING HIDDEN THAT WILL NOT BE KNOWN AND
COME TO LIGHT.” LUKE 8:17**

This wasn't supposed to happen.

When they'd finally decided to end things, he'd promised that he would delete these photos and any other piece of evidence of what had happened between them. So, why were these explicit photos of her plastered all over this blog, and what in the world was this video of one of their hook-ups doing online?! She'd had no idea that he'd recorded any of their intimate encounters.

When she'd checked her notifications this morning, the last thing that she'd expected was to see an in-depth exposé about her stupid, shameful one-year affair with Pastor Reed Monroe--televangelist extraordinaire. She felt so disgusted with herself. How could she have been so reckless?

“God, I know that what I did was wrong, but it happened seven years ago!” Amara prayed out loud. “I was young, stupid and a mess. I've changed since then, and I've done a lot of good work for your Kingdom. Please, don't make me pay for this now. Don't let this ruin me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.”

Just then, her phone rang. She winced as she looked at the caller ID. She already knew how this conversation would go.

“Please tell me that these photos and this video aren’t what I think,” Amara’s manager, Toni, said when she answered the phone. “These are Photoshopped images, right? The video is doctored or something, right? This whole story about how you had an entanglement with a very married pastor while you were his assistant is a complete lie, right? Because I know that I haven’t been moving heaven and earth to represent you and position you as a God-fearing, unproblematic Christian influencer for you to keep this from me!”

“I’m sorry, Toni, but everything in the story is true. Unfortunately, the video and all of the photos are real.”

She heard Toni take a long, deep breath. She could picture her now, tightly clutching her cellphone in one hand and squeezing a stress ball with the other, trying to talk herself out of ending her 10 years of sobriety. Amara never understood why someone who was so easily stressed out picked a job that was so demanding and unpredictable, but she decided to keep that to herself.

“Ok. Well, I’m coming over, and I’m bringing Shanice. We’ve got to figure out how to fix this. This is bad.”

This wasn’t just bad; this was devastating. Amara had worked hard to build a blemish-free brand that represented the righteous, Christian media personality that she’d evolved into, not the hot mess that she’d been in her past. Now all of that was about to go up in smoke, all because some “anonymous” disgruntled former employee of Pastor Monroe had somehow gotten access to this information and decided to spill all of the tea to a blogger.

She sighed and forced herself to shower and get dressed. The only way out was through.

“Shanice, please stop babying her. You’ve got to be the most enabling publicist I’ve ever met,” Toni said, rubbing her temples.

“I know this is bad, but it’s not going to ruin her permanently. I wrote a statement on the way over here about how she’s extremely remorseful about what she did, how she’s come a long way from the young, immature woman who made some destructive choices, etc. I can make some calls and maybe get her an interview with Tenetra Miles from *Tea with Tenetra* to tell her side of the story as soon as possible. She’ll go hard on her, but it’ll show that she’s not shying away from the hard questions everyone has.”

“First, you need to tell us everything that happened during your affair with Pastor Monroe,” Toni said.

“Long story short, one of my friends hooked me up with a job at her church after I dropped out of college. I eventually ended up being the pastor’s assistant, he started taking an interest in me and mentoring me, we got a little too close, especially when he and his wife separated, one thing led to another, and...we messed around for a while, but he eventually worked things out with his wife, and I moved on with my life.”

“What about the photos and the video?”

“He’d ask me to send him the photos sometimes, and I just went along with it. I was a lot wilder back then. I didn’t know anything about the video until today.”

“Dang it, Amara...”

“I know that I messed up. Look, I’m fine with releasing whatever statement you want to put out, but can we wait before we do anything else?” Amara asked.

Both Toni and Shanice looked at her like she was crazy.

“You want to wait? You know that Pastor Monroe’s team is probably strategizing right now to figure out how to paint him as the victim, and you as the desperate tramp trying to break up his marriage, right? We don’t have time to wait.”

“I just need a little time to pull myself together before I start doing interviews and all of that--just 24 hours, at least. I know that I messed up, and I have to deal with the consequences. I just....I can’t deal with this right now, ok?”

Toni and Shanice exchanged a look, Shanice shrugged and Toni sighed before replying.

“Fine. You’ve got 24 hours, but we’re releasing the statement on all of your social media platforms today, and we’re going to do more to address this tomorrow morning. Be at the office tomorrow at 9:30, understand?”

Amara nodded.

She felt bad for lying to them, but she had no intention of being in Atlanta in the next 24 hours. She had to get out of here. She just had to figure out where to go. Then, it hit her. After they left, she quickly dialed the number.

“Hey. Listen, I know that I don’t call a lot, and I probably don’t have the right to ask you this, but...”

“Don’t even worry about it,” the voice on the other end said, reassuringly. “Just get yourself down here, and I’ll get a room ready for you.”

“Thank you,” Amara replied, as she hurriedly started packing.

Here you go running from your problems again, even though you know it won’t solve anything, she found herself thinking as she got ready to leave. She shook the thought. Running away might not solve anything, but it couldn’t make things any worse than they already were...right?

Amara felt relieved as she pulled up to the Heaven On Earth Bed & Breakfast later that evening. She'd spent the seven-and-a-half hour drive to Eden Springs, Tennessee crying, praying and listening to Le'Andria Johnson to calm herself down, and now she just wanted to crawl in bed and block out the world for the rest of the night.

As soon as she'd parked and gotten out of her car, her aunt, Serena, rushed out and enveloped her in a hug.

"It's ok, baby," she said as Amara shed a few more tears. "You're safe here, and you don't have to worry about anything. Let me help you with your bags."

"My chef's done for the day, but I can fix you something and bring it to your room if you want," Aunt Serena said as she quickly checked Amara in and led her upstairs to her room.

"No thanks. I just want to go to sleep."

"Ok. Well, you get some rest. I know that your life's a mess right now, but remember: weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. Good night."

Despite her better judgment, Amara checked her Instagram page. People were dragging her for filth in the comment section under the statement that Shanice had posted. When she checked YouTube, all sorts of vloggers had their own choice words for her and Pastor Monroe.

She sighed as she collapsed on the bed. Yesterday, people were complimenting her on being a remarkable young woman of God, but now people were calling her everything but a child of God. It didn't look like any joy was coming back into her life anytime soon.

#

“WHERE ARE YOU?! I've been calling you! It's 9:45! Don't you know that every minute counts during a crisis?!” Toni exclaimed when Amara answered the phone the next morning.

“Uh...I'm out of town. I need some time to clear my head. I'm sorry.”

“WHAT? Where are you? Forget it! It doesn't even matter. Just get back to Atlanta ASAP!”

“I..I can't...”

“Amara, the longer you wait, the worse things are going to get. So...”

“I'm really sorry Toni, but you're breaking up. I'll let you know when I'm coming back, and I promise that I'll make whatever statements and appearances you need me to make. Sorry. Bye!”

Click.

Amara ignored Toni's subsequent calls and text messages, showered, got dressed and headed downstairs for breakfast.

“I don't care if she is family, mama! I don't want her here, and after everything that she's put you through, you shouldn't either. She's just like Aunt Lena--trifling and inconsiderate.”

Amara knew that she wasn't going to be able to avoid her cousin, Kelly, forever (she was the co-owner of the B&B), but it took all of her strength not to run and hide in her room when she heard her voice.

“Good morning, Aunt Serena. Hey, Kelly. It's good to see you,” Amara said once she was downstairs.

“The feeling is *not* mutual. How long do you plan on staying?”

“I don't know. I...”

“Well, don’t think that you’re going to just have a pity party the whole time that you’re here. Since you’re *family*, you can help us run our *family* business. That means running errands and whatever else we need, got it?”

“Amara, you don’t have to...”

“It’s okay, auntie. It’s the least I can do after all you’ve done for me.”

“Alright. Well, breakfast is in the kitchen.”

Oh my...

When Amara entered the kitchen, she didn’t know which looked more delicious, the display of chicken, waffles, hash browns, eggs, sticky buns and fresh fruit or the caramel complexioned man serving it.

“Good morning. I’m Chef Josiah. What can I get for you?”

Amara ignored the lustful thoughts that had suddenly popped in her head and told him to load her plate up with everything, then grabbed a drink and headed into the dining area.

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself,” she heard a voice say behind her as she took a seat.

She turned around to see an elderly woman glaring at her.

“Excuse me?”

“You heard me. You did all those YouTube videos, wrote those books and journals and spoke at all of those conferences trying to tell women how to live Godly lives, and you used to be laid up with a pastor! It’s people like you and Pastor Monroe that make it hard for Christians to be taken seriously. You talk righteously and live ratchetly. Now, you’re hiding out here, and he’s all over the internet crying and carrying on, with his wife nowhere to be found.”

Amara suddenly lost her appetite. It wasn't like she'd expected Reed to wait forever to make a statement, but part of her was hoping that he'd hide in shame for a little while like she was doing.

She had to find out exactly what he was saying. She abandoned her breakfast and headed upstairs to find the video.

"I would like to apologize to my wife and my congregation for my past indiscretion and the embarrassment that it has caused. I betrayed your trust and allowed the constant advances of a relentless temptress to cloud my judgment during a vulnerable time in my life and my marriage," Reed sniffled. "I will be temporarily stepping away from the ministry to work on my marriage and my relationship with God and not be a distraction to what is going on in the church. I thank you in advance for your respect of my privacy and your prayers for my deliverance."

Amara felt sick. *Relentless temptress?* He was the one who had pursued *her*. She'd never initiated their arrangement. She couldn't say that she was surprised at his reaction, though. Toni had told her that he'd try to throw her under the bus.

Aside from the embarrassment that she felt for her ruined reputation, she also felt guilty about how this would reflect on other Christians who were public figures. She thought about what the woman had said at breakfast-- "*It's people like you and Pastor Monroe that make it hard for Christians to be taken seriously.*"

As much as she hated to admit it, that lady was kind of right. When it came to people who were associated with "the church" and people who made Christianity a major part of their brands, it didn't take much to get canceled and condemned when you made a mistake, and sometimes people were quick to view the mistakes of one Christian as being reflective of how the majority of Christians acted.

She'd known about the higher standards and higher level of scrutiny when she'd decided to pursue a career as a Christian media personality and motivational speaker, but she'd told herself that it was worth it because the work she was doing was her calling. In spite of everything, she still felt like she was called to do the work that she'd been doing. She just had to figure out how to make things right and get back to doing it.

“God, my life is a mess right now. I made some stupid mistakes just because they felt good at the time, and I know that I should've known better and done better...I just didn't. I've done a lot of damage, and I don't even know where to start to put the pieces of my life back together. Please...help me fix this. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.”

#

Amara was glad to be kept busy the next day. Kelly gave her plenty of tasks to do around the B&B and plenty of errands to run that kept her busy for most of the day. After she'd completed her tasks, she drove to Eden Springs Park, took a walk and tried to figure out how she was going to put her life back together. After about an hour of reflecting and praying and still no idea of what to do next, she headed back to Heaven on Earth.

She froze when she saw who was sitting in her room. This couldn't be real...could it?

“Lady Monroe? What...what are you doing here, and how did you even find me?”

“I’m here because I want answers--answers that my husband won’t give me--about what happened between you two seven years ago. Your cousin DM’ed me yesterday with a photo of you and told me that you were here. I was visiting some family in Memphis, so I figured I’d stop by and have a woman-to-woman conversation with the piece of meat that managed to keep my very easily distracted husband’s attention for a whole year.”

Amara wanted to storm downstairs and rip Kelly to shreds, but she couldn’t move. Her eyes were fixed on the immaculately dressed and eerily calm elderly woman in front of her.

“Well, don’t just stand there. Sit down. We’ve got a lot to talk about.”