

RELATIONSHIPS

BY RICHARD ATEGEKA

On August 31, 1991, a wedding in Bushenyi district took a turn no one expected. The cars had delayed. The programme had been confused. The bride had already endured a moment of doubt after stepping out of church to find not the elegant convoy she imagined but a dusty, unwashed vehicle waiting to take her to the reception.

"I remember standing there thinking, so this is marriage?" Loy Abaine Muhwezi recalls.

But the real shock came later. Before speeches followed the usual order, before guests fully settled into celebration, the groom stood up, took the microphone, gave his life to Christ.

Benard Justus Muhwezi announced: "Today, I am saved."

MISSION

Friends who knew him as a dancer, a lively social figure, a break-dancing mathematics lover, quietly slipped away.

"That wedding ended as a mission," Abaine says. My man got saved."

Thirty-five years later, the Muhwezis are still together, laughing, debating, dancing in their living room "for the Lord", raising voices of counsel to a generation struggling with love, marriage and parenting.

Their story began with equations at school.

Their love story did not begin with romance, but with chalk, equations and a bright girl in a classroom.

Muhwezi grew up in Bushenyi and was the only boy then among two children from different mothers.

His father, from Nyabubare in Igara, was a policeman who later became a parish chief. From an early age, he learned discipline, work and responsibility as he did all the house chores, lessons he says many modern boys are denied.

A brilliant student, he earned a bursary to Ntare School, where he spent six years before joining Makerere University to study physics.

During his Senior Six vacation, there was a shortage of mathematics teachers in the district, and he would teach at Bweranyangi Girls'

FROM A WEDDING DAY SHOCK TO 35 YEARS OF PURPOSEFUL LOVE



The Muhwezis with their grandchildren

School in Mbarara.

That is where he first noticed his darling.

"She was the most intelligent in class, her nose always buried in books, disciplined and interested in sciences. She caught my eye," he says.

Abaine was then just a student, brown-skinned, tall, with a well-curved body, serious, a leader, a prefect, always carrying herself with quiet confidence.

Muhwezi taught for a short time, helping the students, before moving on. Along the way, he became friends with her brother, an accountant working with the diocese then, and slowly, almost unknowingly, he became a family friend.

"At that time, she was like a sister," he says. "A friend and nothing more."

LOOKING FOR A WIFE

Life moved on. Muhwezi completed campus, became a lecturer at Uganda Polytechnic Kyambogo, before it became Kyambogo University.

Abaine, years later, joined the same institution to pursue an ordinary diploma in architectural draftsmanship and she was in a different department from where Muhwezi taught.

By then, he was old enough to think seriously about



Benard and Loy Muhwezi have been married for 35 years

marriage.

Ironically, Abaine helped him look for a potential wife for marriage, not knowing that the tables would later turn. "We were looking for girls for him to marry," she recalls. "And I was seriously helping a friend."

But every attempt failed. Muhwezi says: "I realised I was looking for a woman, but God was showing me her."

When he finally told her how he felt, she thought he had lost his mind.

"He wrote me a letter, detailing his request for my hand in marriage and how he felt about me," she says,

shaking her head. "I gave him a cold look. I said this man has looked for women everywhere and failed, and now he has come to me? He is mad."

She didn't take him seriously. They were friends. Close friends. Marriage felt disruptive.

Worse still, her brother strongly opposed the idea and acceptance took time after long paragraphs of prayer, patience and silence.

"I continued praying," he says. "Because I knew God had shown me. I never changed my mind, and she was the new catch of the

ADVICE TO WOMEN

Loy Abaine Muhwezi advises wives to respect their husbands for a good marriage life.

"Even if love is difficult, respect him." She warns against using children against fathers.

"I never gave my children money directly. I gave their father."

Small things matter, she insists. "Is his shirt ironed? Has he eaten? That is why some men eat from restaurants and come home late."

year."

Eventually, resistance softened. The brother relented and later became his in-law

HER OWN CONDITIONS

"When I decided to marry him," she says, "I told myself I will never divorce. But if you mistreat me, I will walk away." She wanted peace and faith, and also for him to get saved, as he wasn't at the moment.

Muhwezi surprised her in quieter ways. He never pressured her physically.

"Some saved people were hypocrites," she says. "They would chase girls. But he never asked to sleep with me. That's when I knew he was different."

"I liked dark-skinned men and he was also tall," she adds. "He liked brown girls. So we balanced the equation."

MARRIAGE DID NOT MAKE LIFE EASIER

Their marriage has not been perfect, but it has been peaceful. They say they have seen trouble as any other couple, but God has been on their side.

They agreed early on trusting each other, not

involving third parties, praying together and growing together to hold each other's hand in times of need.

"What breaks marriages is not the two people," Abaine says. "It is outsiders."

They have lived with Muhwezi's parents for years, caring for his father, who was sick for a decade. They raised six children, four biological, two adopted from Abaine's late sisters and now all in science-related careers and journeys.

PARENTING

When Abaine went to the Netherlands for further studies, she left behind a six-month-old baby.

"I slept with the baby, changed diapers, came home early, hospitals questioned me about the whereabouts of the baby's mother and also judged both of us," Muhwezi narrates

However, years earlier, he had also gone to study in the Netherlands and left his wife with their first-born, who was four months old and so couldn't refuse. "I learned patience, humility and calmness and also swallowed my pride."

Their advice to young men is blunt. "Marriage is not a competition," Muhwezi says. "If your wife is growing, you must also grow."

He warns against lazy men, as women are overtaking men because they are sleeping.

At home, he handles crop and animal farming.

Muhwezi believes boys are raised wrongly because girls do all the chores while boys do nothing, making them fail in some aspects of life, including building strong homes.

The Muhwezis discouraged television addiction and encouraged more conversations at home.

They pray before eating, sleeping, or travelling. Every Christmas is celebrated together.

Birthdays include even house helpers and speaking their mother tongue is mandatory at home.

Today, the Muhwezis are patrons at St Kakumba Chapel, Kyambogo University, mentors to young married couples, members of the Fathers' Union and Christian fellowship.