

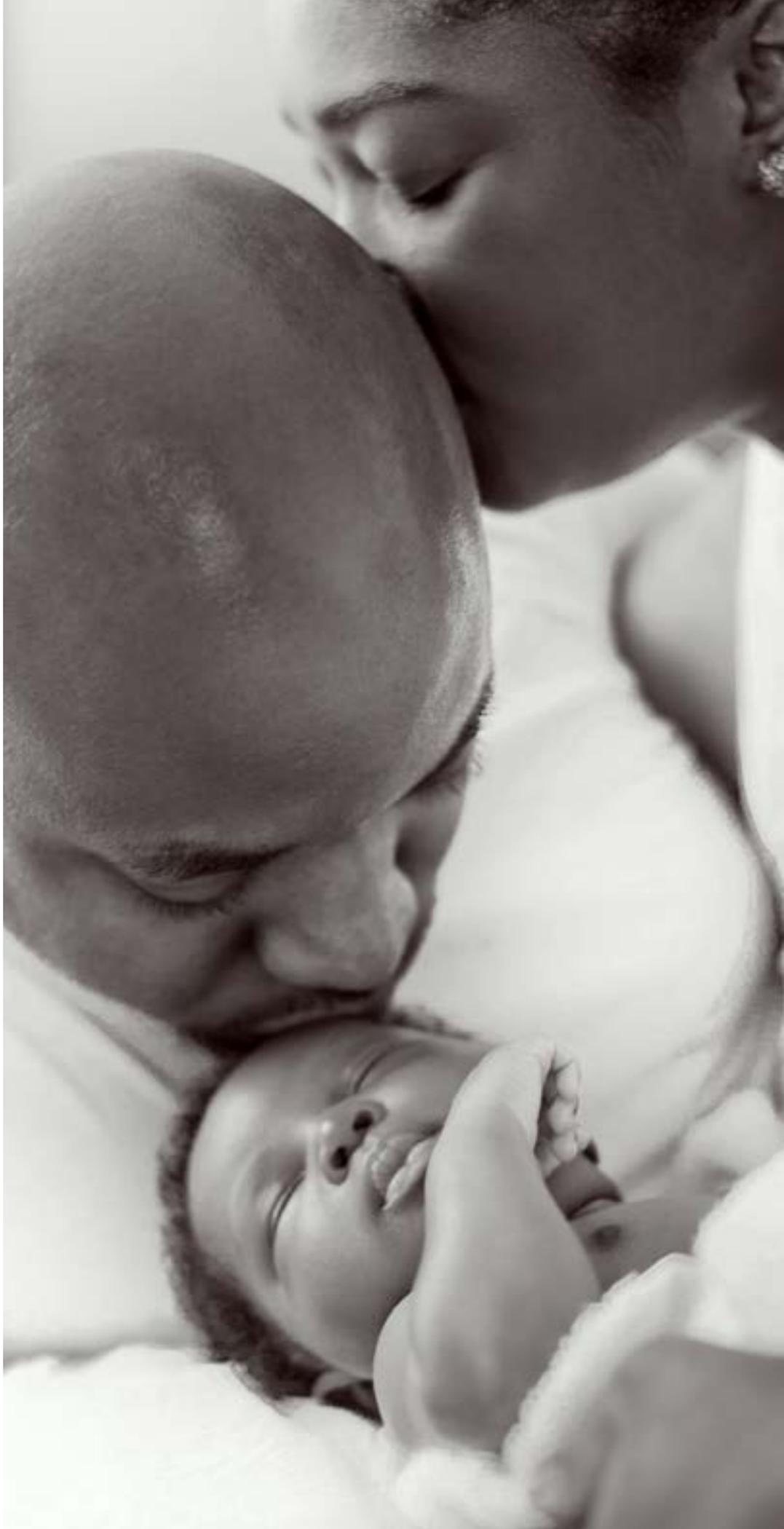


NK
LITERARY CAFE
MAGAZINE

A TRIBUTE TO OUR
MEN

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Editorial

This magazine hit a major roadblock a month ago where this issue almost didn't make it into print. No, it wasn't because my production crew was missing in action. No, it wasn't because the financial resources weren't there. I put out the call for articles for the Father's Day issue of the Naleighna Kai Literary Café Magazine and was met with ... crickets. Then the reasons why my normal circle of amazing writers couldn't chime in and put their experiences to print flowed into my inbox and email. I wanted to give the same credence to this issue that I did to the Mothers. I was so saddened by their stories that I almost pulled the plug on this particular issue altogether. Even with the fact that I couldn't write about my own; I just knew there was a world of great experiences with fathers out there.

Please know, that between these pages are a few who have written about fathers, father-figures, brothers, husbands who made an impact on their lives. I had to shift the focus strictly being about fathers alone and mostly have the writing slant towards good, strong, wonderful men. I'm glad that I didn't table this issue because it's important for the world to know that these

types of men exist. So you'll see some new writers this time out, and the stories are powerful and might cause you to break out the tissues.

Also, there is a nod to the graduates as they deserve a shout out for their accomplishments. Given that my newsfeed had been filled with cap and gown images and proud words to family members who have walked across the stage, I thought it was important to include.

Oh, and it also bears mentioning that for the first time, I did not do the interior layout for the magazine as I have done for all previous issues. I thought of ways to top the Mother's Day issue which was a labor of love and was my best work to date. My son, **J. L. Woodson**, nudged me out of the way and took over this one, and rightly so. As a recent graduate of Columbia College with a degree in graphic design and an impressive list of clients to start out with, this is definitely in his wheelhouse. I hope you love the new look of the magazine. Be sure to let him know what you think: jlwoodson@woodsonstudio.com.



The Legacy

by Sierra Kay



ON SUNDAY MORNINGS, my dad often cooked a full spread of either pancakes or waffles, scrambled eggs, and Brown and Serve® beef sausage. He would try to convince us again that Alaga® syrup was good (I'm sorry Alaga, but that's a taste I never quite acquired). Truthfully I preferred Log Cabin® or Mrs. Butterworth's®. Once, I woke early and my dad was in the usual spot in our kitchen, which allowed me to spend a few quiet moments with him. This day we played a simple card game, a few laughs and a wonderful time shared between father and daughter. It's these moments that I cherish to this day.

In the little time between his two jobs, he encouraged debates on any topics. Even today, years after his passing, Thanksgiving dinner is more of a precursor to a current events lesson than anything else.

My father constantly consumed knowledge and as his children, we did too, by being able to participate in the discussions around the kitchen table. My appreciation for documentaries is a legacy from my dad. Random bits of knowledge of insects and

Ancient Egypt still float around in my head. As a child, we actually watched Dr. Who together. If you've never heard of it, then you're not quite the nerd that I am. Nor, were you addicted to public television, as my dad had been.

Not only that, but we grew up on stories of my dad and his friend, Malcolm X. Through some of our talks, I learned that my dad stood next to many notable, but no less passionate, historical figures. He could and did speak in front of hundreds of people.

But to support his family, he dealt with a lot. First instance, one of his jobs refused to promote him, and it didn't matter that he trained every supervisor that walked through the door. And every supervisor he had was white. So for this man, who loved knowledge more than Walt Disney loved that soon-to-be famous Mouse, to continually be passed up for a supervisory position year after year, and have to train the replacement must have stuck in his craw deeper than Excalibur in the stone. Although he shared that disappointment at one time, he never let it consume him as so many other men would. It was our lesson on

understanding the workings of our world.

But he gave another lesson, the importance of being present. He took time to play cards with me, his youngest child, cook all of his children breakfast and exist in those precious moments with us.

That's what fathers did, right? Daddies sat at the head of the table at dinner every night. Daddies played games like cards and chess. Daddies cooked pancakes. Daddies kept demeaning jobs to keep food on the table. Daddies only slept three to four hours a night.

No, they don't. Only later would I learn that those traits did not happen with all fathers. Matter of fact, the absence of my paternal grandfather at the head of his household probably guaranteed the presence of my father at the head of ours. My father made a choice, and I'm eternally grateful for and humbled by it.

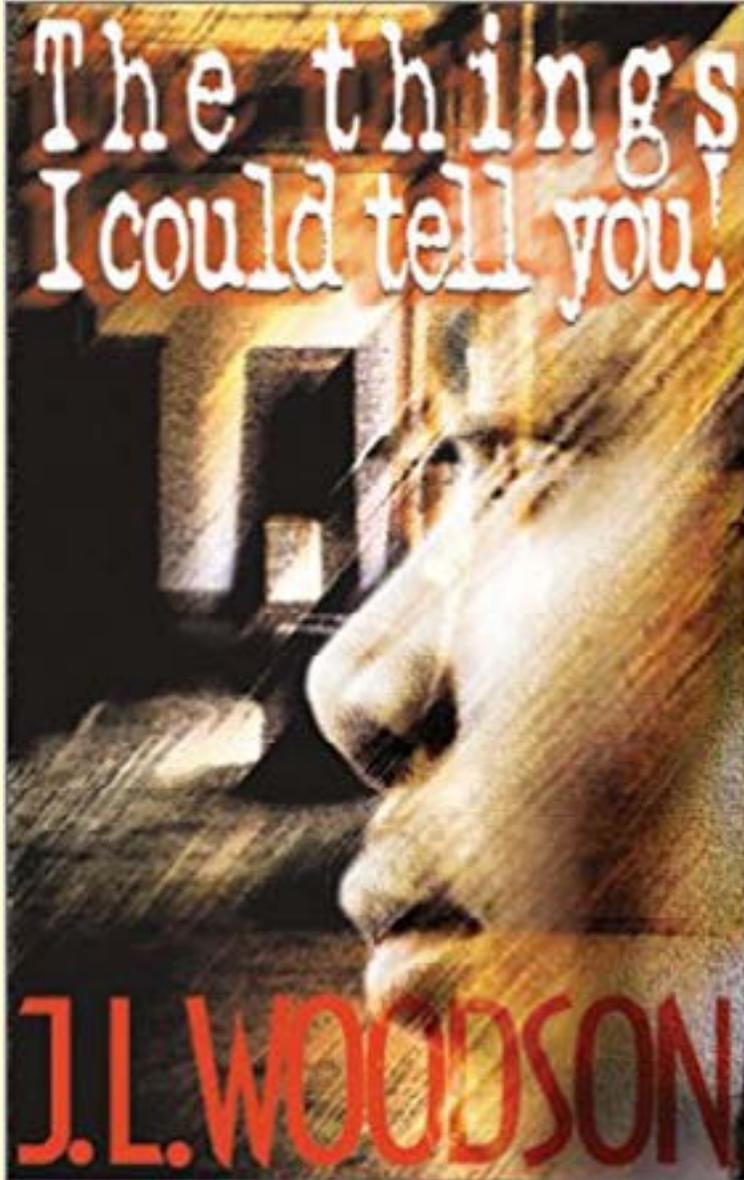
When analyzing my childhood, it never occurred to me to attach the word "sacrifice" to either of my parents. I just bopped around living my life not realizing how utterly tired and weary my father must have been. Yet, he maintained a quick wit, an easy smile, and a bottomless supply of patience and love.

My father's jobs didn't matter. That title was irrelevant. The title that they denied him didn't build his legacy. The one he embraced – Father – did. When his heart gave out my senior year in college, we, his children, stood as a testament to the man he was.

We are the legacy that endures.



HARPER'S COURT



THE THINGS I CAN TELL YOU

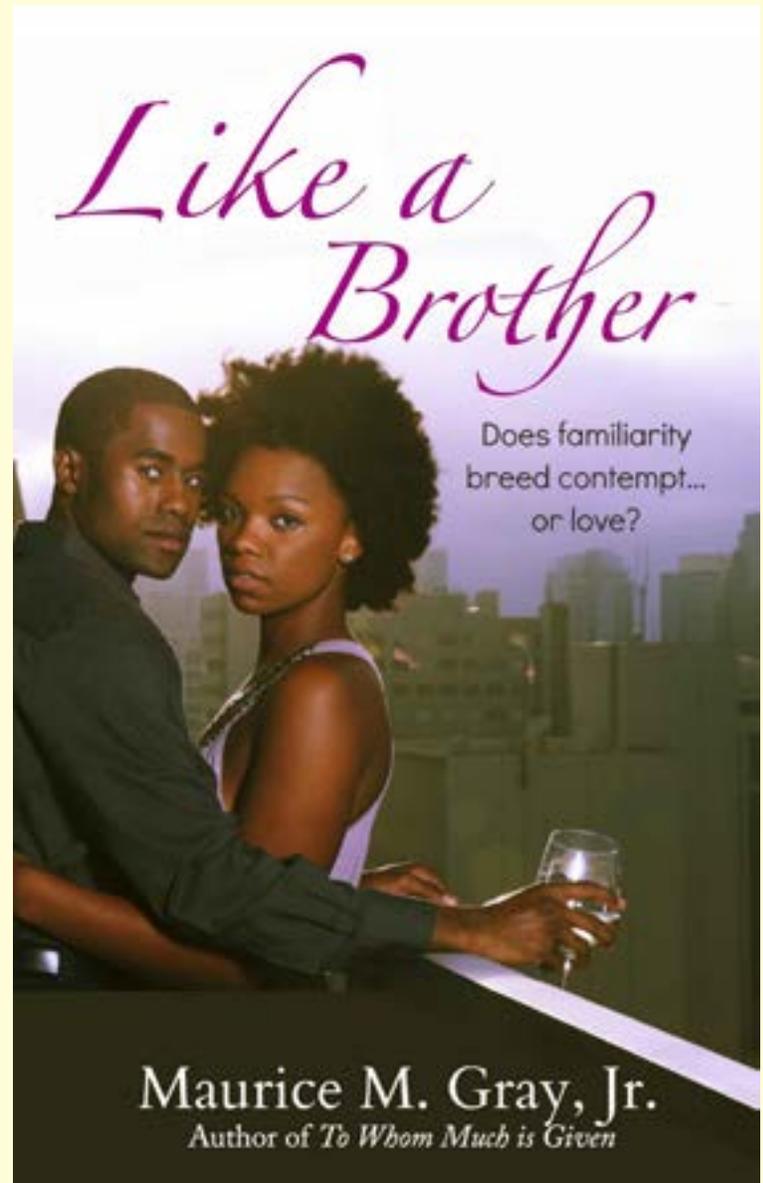
Thirteen-year old Cameron Spears, and his family are forced to move from Chicago to Memphis and change their identities because of an abusive father. Cameron and his sister, Andrea were born of mixed heritage through an African American mother and a Mexican American father which brings its own set of issues when they're forced to fell. After their father shoots their mother and is thrown in jail, they make the move and try to get on with their new lives. Cameron is still a typical teenager, trying to keep his sister in line, as well as trying to not be like his father. Then the unspeakable happens. And it can cause horrible results.

This is a moving story of domestic violence told through the eyes of this young man who is impacted by the actions of his father, but more perturbed by the effect that it has had on his mother. This story was masterfully written, will keep you on the edge of your seat and will send your emotions in a tailspin. The Author was fifteen at the time of this book being published, but he was obviously wise beyond his years and has done better than some adult authors at penning this novel. This book is suitable for teens, as well as adults.

LIKE A BROTHER

Most men have not been that great at penning romance novels. Maurice Gray's *Like a Brother* is the exception. Jeremiah Alexander lost his entire family at an early age. He is the oldest of a tribe of adopted children. Every one, except the parents and one sibling, has taken advantage of him in some way. From babysitting at the last minute to being an instant ATM, Jeremiah does it all. He's also been in love with Jenisse for over twenty years, but she sees him as nothing more than a brother, unless she's stranded or needs a date for an event. Unfortunately, neither one of them can move on until they seek God and finally figure things out.

This story shows what can eventually happen when we put God first in our lives and stop trying to get ahead of His plan. It also shows what can happen when "nice guys" finally stop allowing people to take advantage of them. I thoroughly enjoyed this story and will be looking for others from the author's backlist.



Shannan Harper is an avid reader and book lover turned blogger. She hails from Chicago and when she doesn't have her nose in a book, she's thinking about her next read.





PORTIA'S RANDOM THOUGHTS & SUMMER WATCH LIST

What I'm listening to:
Leela James
"Don't Want You Back"

Random Thoughts:

1. Who in the world came up with this Mac n' Cheetos thing at Burger King?? Eww!!
2. Shades of Blue is my show!
3. Only celebrate those who deserve it. Otherwise, celebrations have no real meaning.
4. I broke up with writing for a while, but we're in counseling, trying to get that old thang back. Things are looking up. Keep us in your prayers.
5. Remember Micro Magic fries? I used to inhale those things after school!
6. When given the option, choose your battles wisely.
7. I wonder if LeVar Burton ever catches himself humming the theme song to "Reading Rainbow."
8. I miss the days when I'd sit next to the radio waiting for them to play my favorite song so I could record it.
9. Do it right or don't do it at all.
10. Big shout out to the fathers who are an integral part of their children's lives.

SUMMER WATCH LIST



ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK

Season 5

June 9, Netflix

I'm curious to see what happens in the new season of OITNB. Last season was just okay to me. Laverne Cox was absent most of the season, and some storylines felt contrived or were dragged out way too long. However, I will give Season 5 a look in hopes that the OITNB I would binge-watch on day one is back.

SUMMER WATCH LIST



QUEEN SUGAR

Season 2

June 20-21, OWN, 10pm

Yes, Lawd! Queen Sugar is back with Season 2. Last season, we watched Charley go through hell in her personal life and in her newfound role as part-owner of a sugar cane farm. By the time the last episode aired, though, she was the proud owner of a refinery – a first for Black folks in the South.

1. I hope Nova doesn't get on my nerves as much this season. Her hypocritical ways made it hard for me to love her the way I want to.
2. I wonder if Hollywood will make his way back into Aunt Vi's heart.
3. #TeamDarla
4. From the looks of the previews, racial tensions may be heightened this season.

SUMMER WATCH LIST

POWER

Season 4

June 25, Starz, 9pm

At the end of Season 3, we watched Ghost get arrested thanks to his side-chick who, after months of dealing with him, felt like he was a murderous monster who killed her ex-boyfriend. The part of me that loves Omari Hardwick was crushed, but the part of me who has been shaking my head at his character, Ghost, was like, "That's what you get!" Same goes for his hardheaded son who fell into the web of Ghost's enemy, Kanan, and was kidnapped and unconscious last we knew.

1. I need to know where Tasha's friend Kesha is.
2. Tasha needs a boo this season. Ghost has been getting his entire double life far too long. She's got next.
3. I cringe at the thought of Kanan's buddies from the pen jumping or dare I say raping Ghost while he's locked up.
4. I already know Tommy is going to be hella reckless. Let us pray.



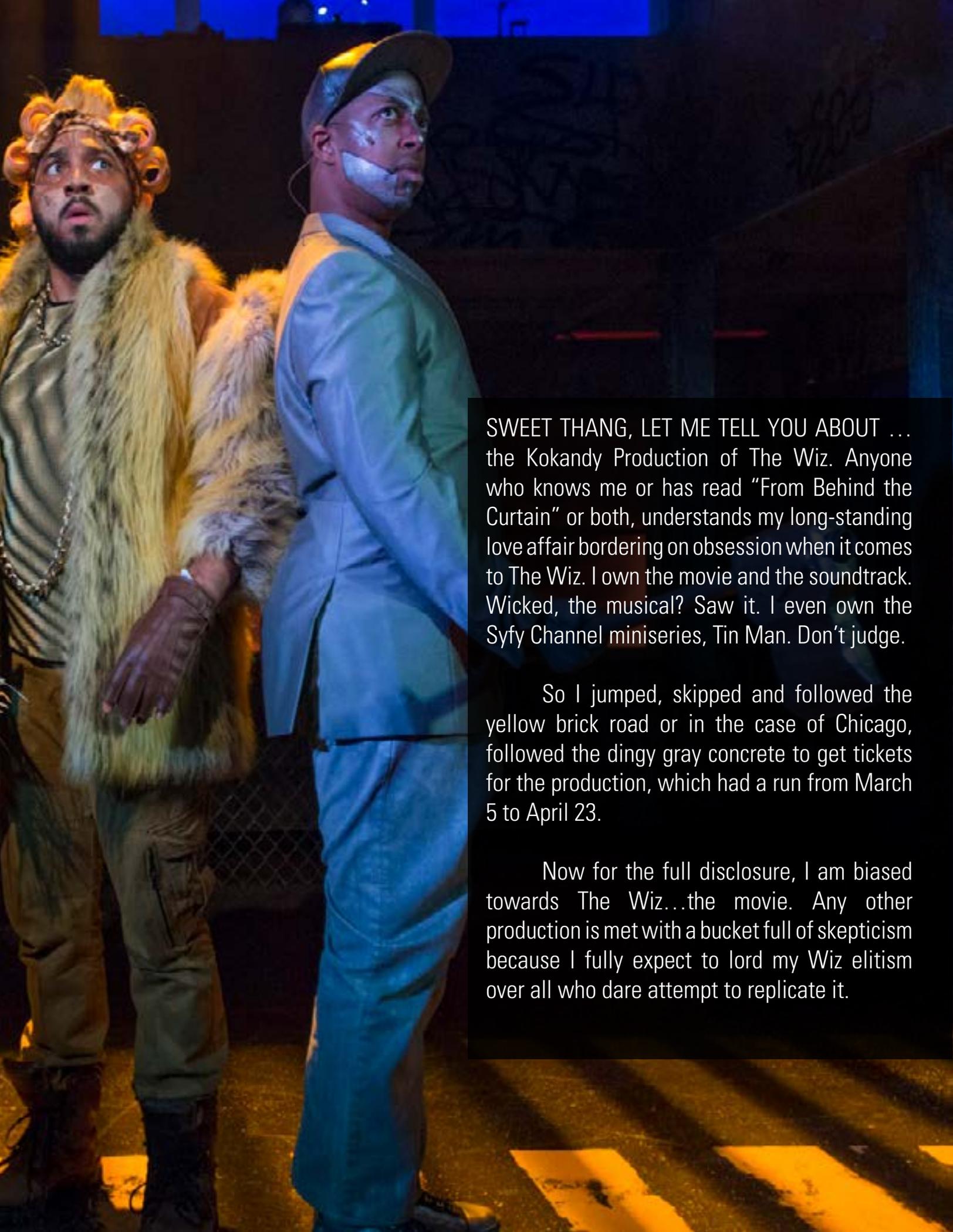


Review

Kokandy's Production of

THE WIZ

By: Sierra Kay



SWEET THANG, LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT ... the Kokandy Production of The Wiz. Anyone who knows me or has read "From Behind the Curtain" or both, understands my long-standing love affair bordering on obsession when it comes to The Wiz. I own the movie and the soundtrack. Wicked, the musical? Saw it. I even own the Syfy Channel miniseries, Tin Man. Don't judge.

So I jumped, skipped and followed the yellow brick road or in the case of Chicago, followed the dingy gray concrete to get tickets for the production, which had a run from March 5 to April 23.

Now for the full disclosure, I am biased towards The Wiz...the movie. Any other production is met with a bucket full of skepticism because I fully expect to lord my Wiz elitism over all who dare attempt to replicate it.

The Wiz is an urban retelling of the Wizard of Oz, a musical based on the book released in 1900 by L. Frank Baum. The story revolves around the main character, Dorothy, who is swept into a tornado and finds herself in the Land of Oz. She inadvertently kills the Wicked Witch of the East during her not so clean landing. A good witch entreats Dorothy to take the wicked witch's special shoes and recommends that Dorothy asks The Wiz for assistance getting home.

As Dorothy follows along the path to The Wiz's home in Emerald City, she meets several companions in need of The Wiz's assistance. During the journey, she also encounters the Wicked



Witch of the West intent on exacting revenge and getting her sister's special red shoes.

Now, of course, each production takes its liberties in personalizing the show. So when I found out that the play opened up in the Kansas Home project, the side-eye remained firm. Soon, though, the quality of performance and phenomenal casting pulled me into the story.

Steven Perkins as the Tin Man made my right eyebrow arch. This is new because I loved the Lion in the movie. However, in this production, the Tin Man had that something special that could







make anyone rethink their current relationship situation. Ladies, we all have met that man that made our eyes lower to half mast and made whatever man we're out on a date with drag us away. That was him. Although I kept my eye on the Tin Man through the whole production, he didn't remain my favorite character for long.

Evilene, the Wicked Witch of the West played by Anna Dauzvardis, burned the stage down. She portrayed the character with an aura that was a step up and to the left of Grace Jones's freakiness as Strangé in the movie "Boomerang."

Chuckie Benson as The Lion tickled a memory. It drove me crazy until it hit me. Give me a moment so we can take a ride in the "way back" time machine. Remember LeRoy from the movie "Fame?" That was it. The Lion reminded

me of Leroy. I'm still on the fence on if how I felt about that, but I did feel some kind of way.

The actors were varied, unique and talented with voices that may, and I do mean may, have been better than a couple of those in the movie version of the musical. Kokandy Productions did the damn thing. And because of that, they have a fan in me. And maybe there is the remote possibility that the next time I see a production of The Wiz, I'll start with more of an open mind.

Apparently, there is more than one way to ease on down the yellow brick road.

From Behind The Curtain by Sierra Kay

Dee dropped out of high school the moment her mother's battle with cancer took a downward spiral. She became the unlikely breadwinner in a house that had too much pain and not enough money. That also meant dealing with a transient father who struggled with addiction.

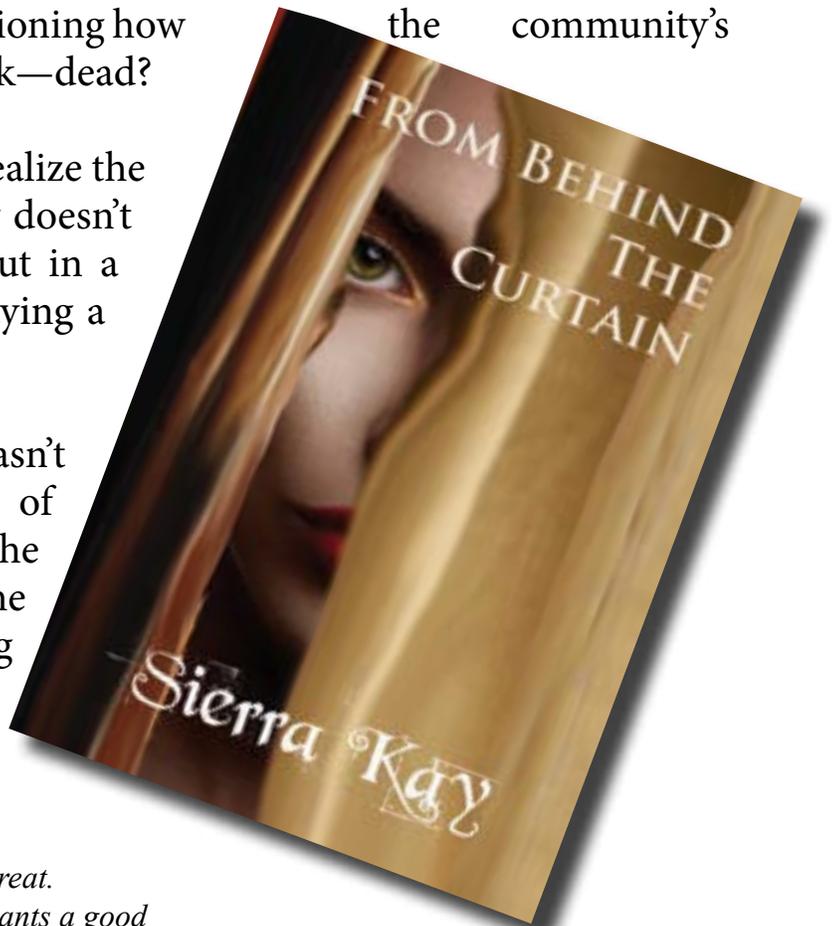
When Auntie M brought Dee to live in Atlanta, things were supposed to be better than life in the Chicago projects. In Atlanta, Dee had new clothes, a full fridge, and her own bedroom. She could finally have a future dictated by opportunity and not circumstance.

However, she soon realized that even this opportunity came with its own price. Something was off about the overdose of Pastor Clifton, her aunt's best friend and secret love. And no one is questioning how the community's leader end up slumped over his desk—dead?

Dee and her new friends begin to realize the problem didn't begin and certainly doesn't end with Pastor Clifton's death. But in a church full of gossips, no one is saying a word.

In Dee's world, that level of power wasn't unheard of. But here, in a world of saints it was difficult to distinguish the sinners and, more importantly, the mastermind who was manipulating everyone from behind the curtain.

"This is one of the better books that I've read in a while. The book is full of character depth, development, and liveliness. The plot was thick and enticing, and the dialogue was great. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants a good solid book to read." --Brandon Wright IABook Reviews



What a **MAN** Does

by: Cerece Rennie Murphy



MY FATHER TAUGHT ME MANY THINGS. In my household, a woman was expected to be smart, driven, accomplished at a level equal to or above her male counterpart, tenacious, financially independent, hardworking, and a good cook. In short, my sister and I were expected to be and do everything.

Those elements were a tall order to fill, but the expectation also laid an important foundation for the person I am today – fiercely independent and acutely aware of my singular value in the world. But it also left one very important question unanswered – If I’m supposed to do and be everything, what exactly is a man supposed to contribute to my life? I spent most of my 20s and early 30s with no real answer to this question – until I met my husband.

We started out as friends. Sekou came to me with an open hand and a willing heart. He respected my opinions while offering his views that expanded and enhanced my analysis of whatever challenge I was facing. He found resources I wouldn’t have thought to seek. He offered an extra pair of eyes to analyze a situation.

He remembered things that I forgot and offered to do things that he was better at than I was. In short, he made what I had better, not necessarily through money, but by bringing his whole self to our relationship. Being with him was the first time I’d ever seen a man be a partner – someone as invested in my success as I am.



Now that we have kids it's even better. Sekou offers our children a completely different experience of love and parenting than I do and our kids thrive and benefit from the fact that Mommy is really into reading and Daddy is really into sports. My kids run faster and climb higher because Daddy lets them do it. My kids know who Nas and Mae Jemison are because of who their Dad is. They are also more confident in their academics because they know Daddy is behind them 100%.

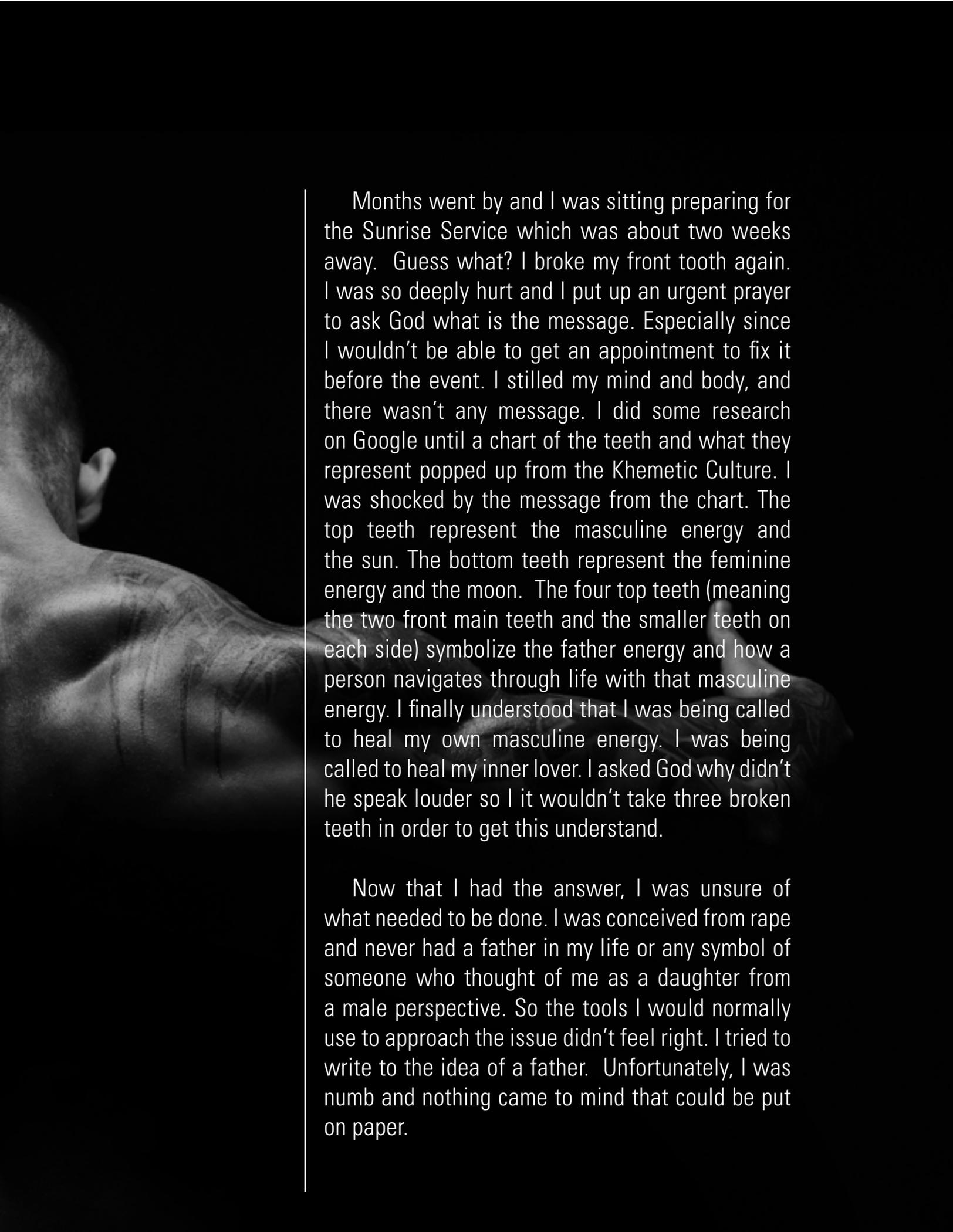
The beautiful life we've created for our children and ourselves could not have been created by me alone; it takes two people, two partners committed of their own free will to do whatever is necessary to build this thing we call family. And now, after experiencing the wonderful, amazing, and absolutely awesome Sekou, I know exactly what a man does.

MEN OR MASCULINE ENERGY IS SYNONYMOUS WITH THE MIND **LOGIC, BELIEF, REASON.**

by: Janine Ingram

AS I WRITE ABOUT THE MASCULINE ENERGY, I am so grateful. I remember standing at the end of the sunrise service the year before hearing God said, "Heal the Masculine Energy." I had an interesting year making the attempt to call forth what Spirit had commanded of me. My front tooth had broken and I was profoundly devastated. I couldn't understand what this was about. I looked it up in *You Can Heal Your Life*, a book by Louise Hay that said every physical manifestation has a metaphysical correlation. A broken tooth is all about decision-making, and for some reason that didn't resonate with me. I went to the dentist to have it fixed. Do you know it broke, again? Now this time I am really devastated, I went to the dentist to get it fixed—again, all the while trying to figure out the message in the experience.





Months went by and I was sitting preparing for the Sunrise Service which was about two weeks away. Guess what? I broke my front tooth again. I was so deeply hurt and I put up an urgent prayer to ask God what is the message. Especially since I wouldn't be able to get an appointment to fix it before the event. I stilled my mind and body, and there wasn't any message. I did some research on Google until a chart of the teeth and what they represent popped up from the Khemetic Culture. I was shocked by the message from the chart. The top teeth represent the masculine energy and the sun. The bottom teeth represent the feminine energy and the moon. The four top teeth (meaning the two front main teeth and the smaller teeth on each side) symbolize the father energy and how a person navigates through life with that masculine energy. I finally understood that I was being called to heal my own masculine energy. I was being called to heal my inner lover. I asked God why didn't he speak louder so I it wouldn't take three broken teeth in order to get this understand.

Now that I had the answer, I was unsure of what needed to be done. I was conceived from rape and never had a father in my life or any symbol of someone who thought of me as a daughter from a male perspective. So the tools I would normally use to approach the issue didn't feel right. I tried to write to the idea of a father. Unfortunately, I was numb and nothing came to mind that could be put on paper.

Truthfully, the instances with my teeth weren't the earliest indication that I needed to heal my masculine energy. The summer at a major R&B radio station while working with the late great Herb Kent provided the first glimpse that something inside of me needed healing. Herb was starting to get older and he would have these episodes when he would tell me how I looked much like and reminded him of his mother. So he told me that to him, I was his daughter and he would introduce me as such. One day, he took me upstairs to speak to an engineer about something he wanted done. We walked in and Herb introduced me to the engineer as his daughter. A flood of tears welled up in my eyes and I was puzzled by my reaction. I had never had any man refer to me as their daughter. So I hid my tears and kept doing my work.

So a few month and three broken teeth later, I was sitting in front of my altar asking Holy Spirit what steps to take to heal my "inner masculine". When I heard Spirit say "The men in your life are a reflection of your inner male." Somehow even though I knew that, it still felt like an "Aha!" moment. My grandmother once said, "Men are our mirrors and they reflect a part of who and what we are. They were marinated in our wombs." She also used to say, "Creators create themselves."

What I've found in my own life is that there's no way that I can create what I long to create, in life, love, or business, without healing this fracture between my own inner Masculine & Feminine.





Here are some journal questions I asked myself in my journey to healing my own divine masculine energy.

- Who and what are my “masculine” role models that best exemplify the masculine to me?
- In what ways does my Inner Masculine run my life? What are the effects of this? Where do I see him most active and in control?
- Where and with whom do I feel challenged in speaking my truth and creating firm, yet flexible, boundaries?

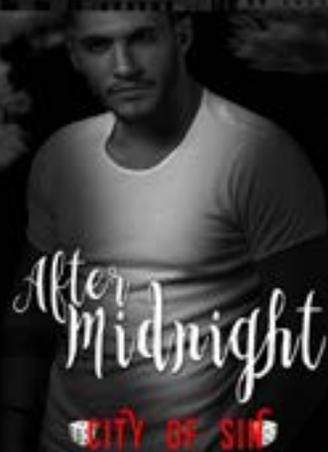
To be whole, and become a powerful woman, we, as women must heal our own Inner, Divine Masculine, just like men at times need to understand how to embrace the other side of them to make them whole.

I dedicate this article to one incredible man in my life—Brenton A Copeland. I thank the Universe for all the lessons and all the Blessings from our thirty-two years of sharing together. I am so grateful that I am able to see myself through the heart of you. I appreciate you so much, not to mention that our children have an amazing father.

You represent the best of what strong, courageous, loving, and compassionate men are all about.

CITY OF SIN

TAKE A CHANCE ROLE THE DICE. IF YOU DARE.



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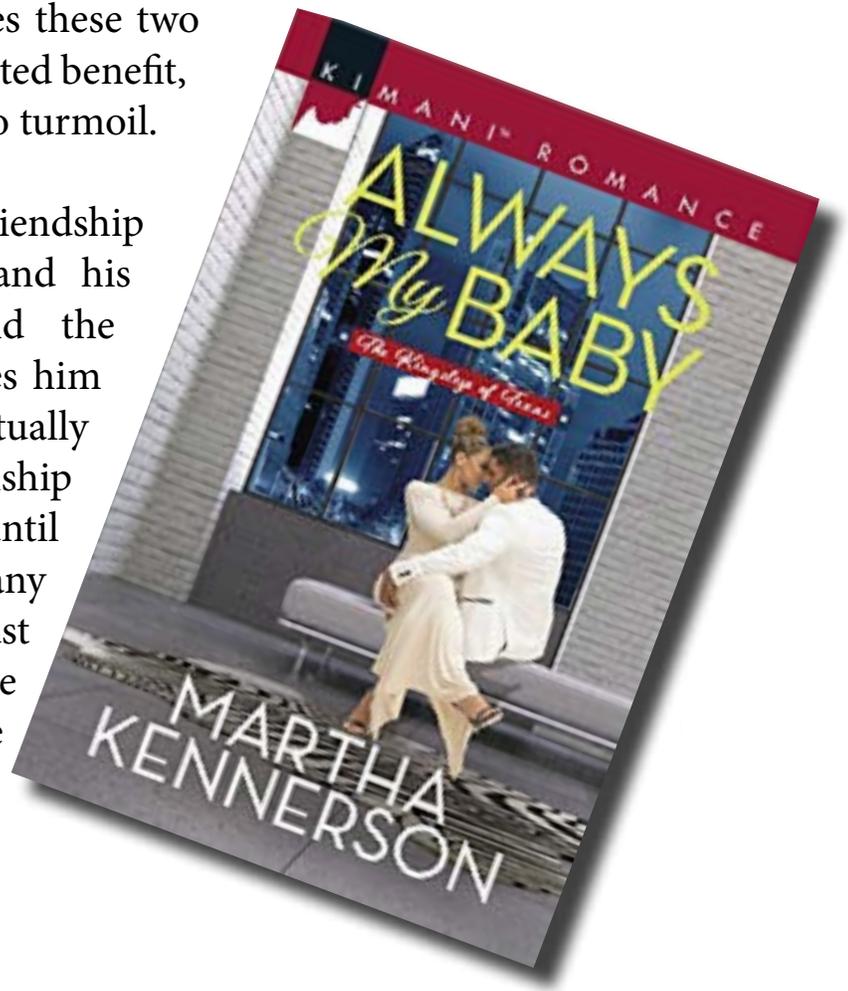
Presents the first in a new series by
national bestselling author

MARTHA KENNERSON

The sweetest surprise...

Ambitious environmental attorney China Edwards pursues every goal with drive and dedication. Having a baby is no different. No husband? No problem—she'll find the perfect donor. Then one spontaneous passionate night with bachelor executive Alexander Kingsley leaves these two longtime friends with an unanticipated benefit, and throws China's future plans into turmoil.

China's brilliant legal mind and friendship are indispensable to Alexander and his multibillion-dollar oil firm. And the possibility of her moving on makes him realize how deep his feelings actually run. Then their all-business relationship takes a wildly erotic detour...until Alexander is drawn into a company scandal that rocks his life. With trust in tatters, can an unplanned bundle of joy lead them to become the family they never expected?



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I CALLED HIM

“Abba”

by: Renee Sesvalah Cobb-Dishman

WHEN I THINK ABOUT FATHER’S DAY, I think about the principles of wisdom, protection, support, a safe place, a provider, a nurturer, and a friend.

Whatever name you call him, Abba, Father, Daddy, Dad, Poppa Papi, or Pops, the image that should come to mind is one that exemplifies courage, trust, strength and love.

My mother was a single parent of five children of which I was the oldest. There were some significant men in our lives who had a positive impact on us. Unfortunately, my father was not one of those men. He didn’t have the pleasure of getting to know me. He left my mother before I was born, but God the creator sent us a ram in the bush. His name was Clarence Cubie, my godfather.

My godfather was not a religious man but he was a spiritual man who was in tune with his “I Am” presence. I don’t think he was aware of it or he definitely would have acknowledged it.

He didn’t go to church, but he lived by spiritual principles. He responded to situations in life by listening to that still small voice inside of him. He would help anyone who needed help, and as the saying goes, he never met a stranger.

My mother worked as a domestic and therefore money was not always as plentiful as we would have liked. I mention that because there were a lot of times when our cupboards were pretty bare. We didn’t have a phone, only the corner phone booth (does anyone remember those?). At the lowest point in our lives, we would hear a knock at the door. When we answered, there stood my godfather who seemed more like Santa. Instead of holding a bag of toys, he held bag of groceries and all of the things that we needed at that time. No one had taken a trip outside to booth to call him and my mother was just as surprised as we were. This occurred many times throughout my childhood. He would show up when I needed money for school, new shoes or a ride to the doctor. He was so in tune that once I had this little boy come over, my godfather

showed up, because he “felt” that he wanted to see us and at time my young visitor needed to have some “male input”. And he was right on time since that youngster was having a problem keeping his hands to himself. My uncle sat in the living room, asked the guy all sorts of questions. Strangely enough, the guy had a totally different demeanor when speaking with my godfather. Just his presence alone commanded respect and let that guy know that someone was looking out for me and he’d better show some respect.

We lived on the north side and later moved to the south side and my godfather lived all the way on the west side. No matter where we lived, time and space did not stop the reach of the still small voice to alert him to when we needed him. He could hear the beat of those spiritual drums and if that rhythm was one that signaled that we needed him ... he stayed true to that calling. He taught spiritual principles mostly through his action.

He never was one to fuss or argue. He said what he needed to say once and did not judge others. He always tried to see the good in others and believed in God. On many occasions he would show up simply to give my mother a much-needed break. The amazing thing is that we never called him, he just knew. He shared his time, wisdom, affection, sense of fun, and money with us without conditions. He always loved me and my siblings for who we were and saw the best in each one of us. He pointed me in the direction of success by teaching me to believe in myself.

My godfather is now on spirit side, but he leaves a legacy in my heart of my Aba, my Father, my Daddy, my godfather.

Happy Father’s day to all the men who are fathers to their children or someone else’s children. I’d like to extend that to all the uncles, male mentors and positive male role models and godfathers.



Sesvalah is the author of *Speak It Into Existence*

The PHOENIX

by: Elle Wright

STRONGER THAN SUPERMAN, TOUGHER THAN MUHAMMAD ALI, I once thought my father could do anything and beat anybody. As a little girl, he told us stories of fighting guerrillas in the Navy, and of driving down one side of the street while a tornado destroyed the other. He was stung by a wasp and didn't even flinch. He wasn't all tough, though. My father was fun, watched silly movies with us, taught us to swim and to cook. Oh, and he let me win at Monopoly. He was the first man I ever loved. My father wasn't Heathcliff Huxtable. He wasn't Uncle Phil. But he was mine.



Things changed when I discovered he was just a man. I couldn't fathom the thought of him making a mistake, but he made many. So many, that I wasn't sure he would ever bounce back or if our relationship would ever be the same. He had hit rock bottom. But God ... God spared my father's life and gave him another chance to get it right. I saw my father climb out of the ashes and reclaim his life despite all the challenges he faced along the way. He could have let his mistakes keep him down, but didn't. He worked hard to become the man he is now. Watching his strength in the face of adversity has helped me become the woman I am today.

My father remains one of the best people I know—flaws and all. There is no one like my dad. His laugh can brighten any day, and his warmth can take away a chill on the coldest night. We don't live in the same state, but he always manages to show up right when I need him. He is giving, loving, and determined to live his best life.

The lessons he taught me are lasting. He once told me to "always keep a stash." That stash of money has saved me many times over. He implored me to pay attention to what people do right, instead of harping on what they do wrong. He taught me the importance of laughter and spontaneity, of being open to possibilities and picking the right card for the occasion.

Because of my dad, I knew what I wanted in a husband—someone who was not afraid of hard work, someone who loved his wife and his children more than anything, someone who knew his way around the kitchen, the garage, and the workplace. I found all those qualities in my husband because of the example my father set.

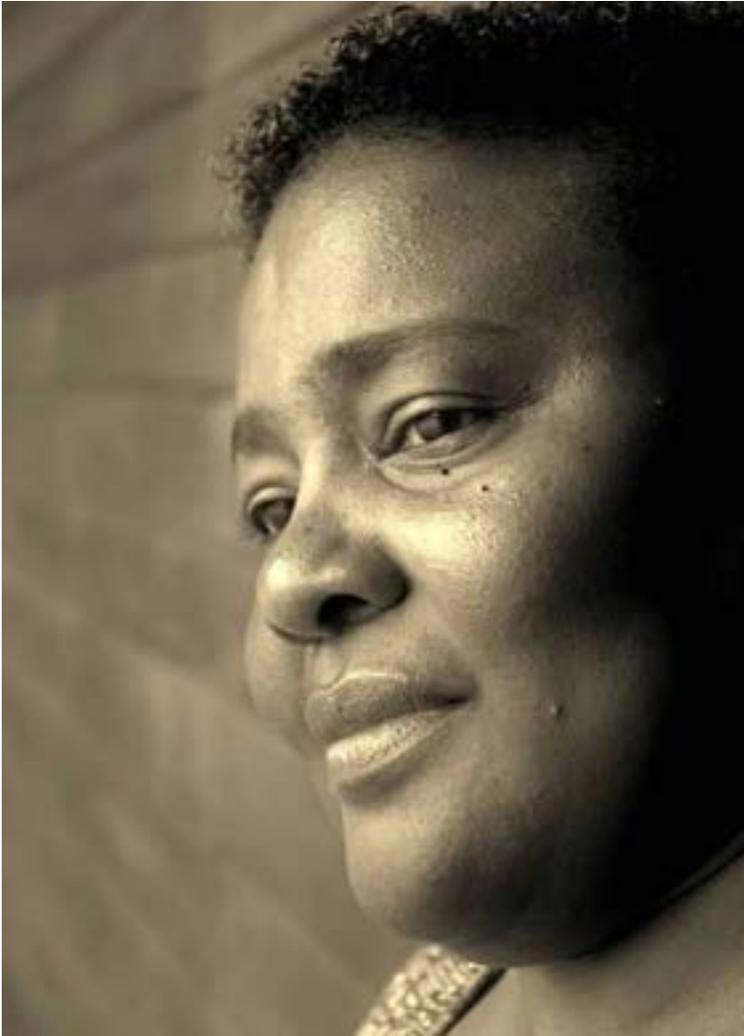
I know that whenever I need someone to listen or to let me win, he'll be there. I thank my dad for being who he is, and I'm blessed to be able to tell him Happy Father's Day for yet another year.

He's my daddy, my friend. And I will always be his "girly-girl."



RAISING SONS:

Men and Women Have a Valuable Part to Play



Anita L. Roseboro-Wade, a native of North Carolina, was born to parents who never finished high school which fostered her determination to obtain a BS in Management Information Systems and a Master's Degree in Business Administration. She is a passionate advocate for children and the cultivation of their minds in that they become productive members of society. Currently, Anita is pursuing her life-long dream of writing.

SOCIETY TODAY WOULD HAVE YOU BELIEVE that every boy needs a father figure in their life to grow into a man. Moreover, it would lead you to believe that this figure can't be a woman. To some extent that is correct, male role models play a part, but mothers are not excluded from playing a part as well. I am neither here to qualify or dispel this belief. Like a gardener, a man plants the seed that grows into the son. However, not every man that plants a seed can bring the seed to fruition. So, are we to believe that the boys who make it into adulthood with only a mother's input, are not, in fact, men?

With my boys, my goal has always been to teach them to be "more than." It doesn't matter what the "more than" is, but for them to always strive to be more than what anyone has told them or more than it has been thought that they will ever be. I extend this knowledge to other boys as well. I have seen first-hand, mothers raising their sons to be husbands and fathers with excellent character regardless of whether there was a father or father figure around. Sons that defy all the odds set against them and become invaluable in society.

Fathers often want their sons to follow in their footsteps. That is all well and good, but if said father

isn't all that great to begin with, why would the son need to follow in those footsteps? All egos aside, we should want the next generation to be better than this generation. This is how we as a people grow and flourish. Every negative word that my boys have ever heard, (whether from their father or anyone else), was followed up with positive reinforcement from me, their mother. My job was to counter the "you can't be this," and instill "you can be whatever you desire to be". I have taught them that no one controls their destiny but them. It is almost as if God himself has allowed mother's insight to be aware of things that will tear boys down.

"You are the master of your destiny. You can influence, direct and control your own environment. You can make your life what you want it to be."

– Napoleon Hill

The truth is, as women we know what we desire in men. We see the qualities that it takes to make a great husband, whom will also become a great father. This is what we should nurture in our sons. This is what we birth in our boys.

We imbue them with love, strength, and validation to be strong men, loving husbands, and protective fathers. The best gift you can give a child is your time. By spending time with them you also teach them that they are valuable, they are loved, they

are wanted and desired. No child should ever need to look outside of their own home to find love and nurturing that should be freely given by the parents that birthed them.

Over the years, I have witnessed so many children—boys and girls alike—looking for love and validation in all the wrong places. We tend to raise our daughters with stricter guidelines but let our sons run free. As if we don't realize that these boys become young men, who become fathers that teach their sons to carry on the same legacy of neglect. So, I say to parents, "when you raise daughters, also raise your sons to be young men who become better fathers that push and coach their sons and daughters into greatness."

There truly are some fathers who get it right every day, all day. I salute each and every one of you. Yet, there are far more sitting around waiting on accolades when their kid becomes a famous sportsman, politician, lawyer, judge, or businessman. If someone desires to be around for the highs, be man enough to be around for the lows as well.

So, whether you are a father raising sons or a mother who has to fill that void where a father should be, raise your sons. Validate them, love them, encourage them, and reassure them. Teach them to be "more than."

The same positive traits that are poured into the vessel that is called a son, will be the same traits that they, in turn, bequeath to their children, for generations to come. This is the most valuable inheritance they will ever receive.

E.N. Joy's Chocolate Chat

We welcome Joylynn M. Ross writing as E. N. Joy, formerly wrote under the names Joylynn M. Jossel and Joy, to Naleighna Kai's Literary Café.

Shannan Harper: Did you always know you wanted to be an author?

E N Joy: Absolutely. Not a single one of my high school friends are surprised that I turned out to be an author. I'll admit that I was torn between being a lawyer and author. I took my LSAT, toured the law school, and got my letters of recommendation. I was a paralegal for 13 years. When I got my pink slip I decided to take my 401K and severance package and invest it into self-publishing this very book (my first full-length novel). I told myself if this didn't work out, then I'd head to law school. I ended up self-publishing this book, sold 12,500 copies of it, eventually landing a book deal with St. Martin's Press for this very book to be reprinted. I've never looked back since.

Angela Lackey: What made you write under several different names?

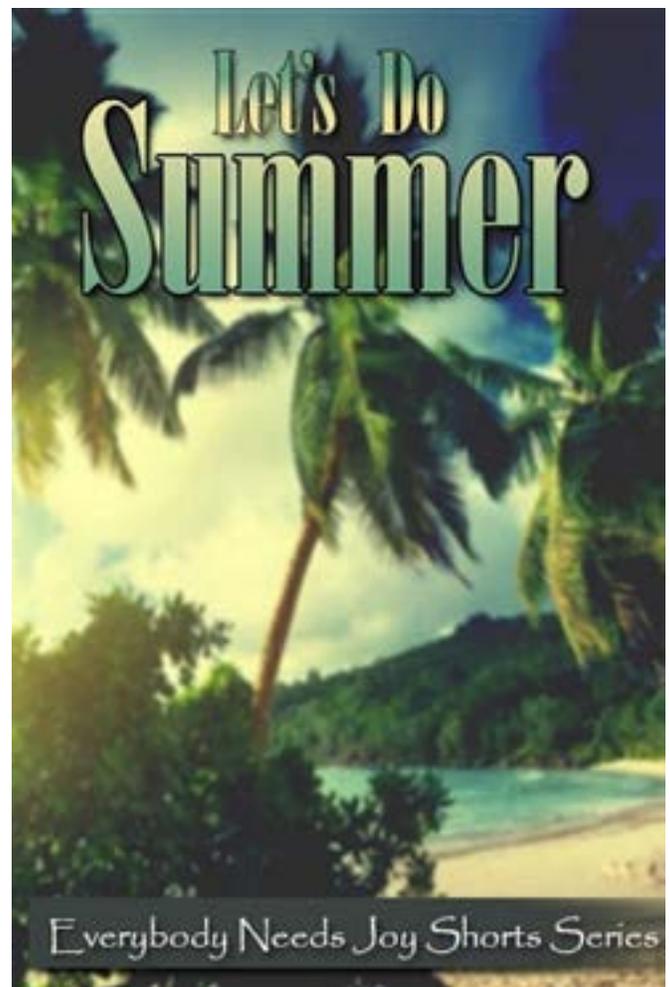


E N Joy: When I first started writing I wrote women's lit and erotica under the name Joylynn M. Jossel. When I decided to pen street lit as well, I knew that I needed to choose a pen name to write under because not all of my chick lit/erotic readers were into street lit. So I decided to write street lit under the name JOY. When I got saved I knew that I, once again, needed to come up with a new pen name, so I went with BLESSEDselling Author E. N. Joy. When I got a book deal for my children's book, *The Secret Olivia Told Me*, the publisher asked me could I drop the "E" from E. N. Joy, so I just wrote it under N. Joy. Each pen name reflects a different genre. Readers know what they are getting based on the name.

Christine Pauls: Have you ventured into any other genres besides Christian Fiction? I haven't read any of your books yet but I do have two on my kindle. *Every Good Woman* and *One Sunday at a Time*.

E N Joy: I've written women's lit and erotica under the name Joylynn M. Jossel. I wrote street lit under the name JOY. I write Christian fiction under the name E. N. Joy, and I write children's and middle grade under the name N. Joy. Behind *Every Good Woman* originally a short story I'd written under the name Joylynn M. Jossel. When the anthology went out of print and I got my rights back, I did the best I could to turn it into Christian fiction. It's still a little edgy, but I tried my best. I have two shorts written under E. N. Joy titled *Let's Do Summer* and *The Miserable Wives Club* that are romance.

Anita Roseboro-Wade: Do you prefer self publishing over the traditional publishing?



E N Joy: I absolutely prefer self-publishing over traditional. As a matter of fact, I teach self-publishing workshops. I'm an online course instructor for the Path To Publishing online school: www.path-to-publishing.thinkific.com. I'm what the industry refers to as a hybrid author. I'm both traditionally and self-published. But just a few months ago I turned down a book deal. I'm going the self-publishing route all the way!

Christine Pauls: You wear a lot of hats in this industry. Do you enjoy one more than the other? Or are all equally gratifying?

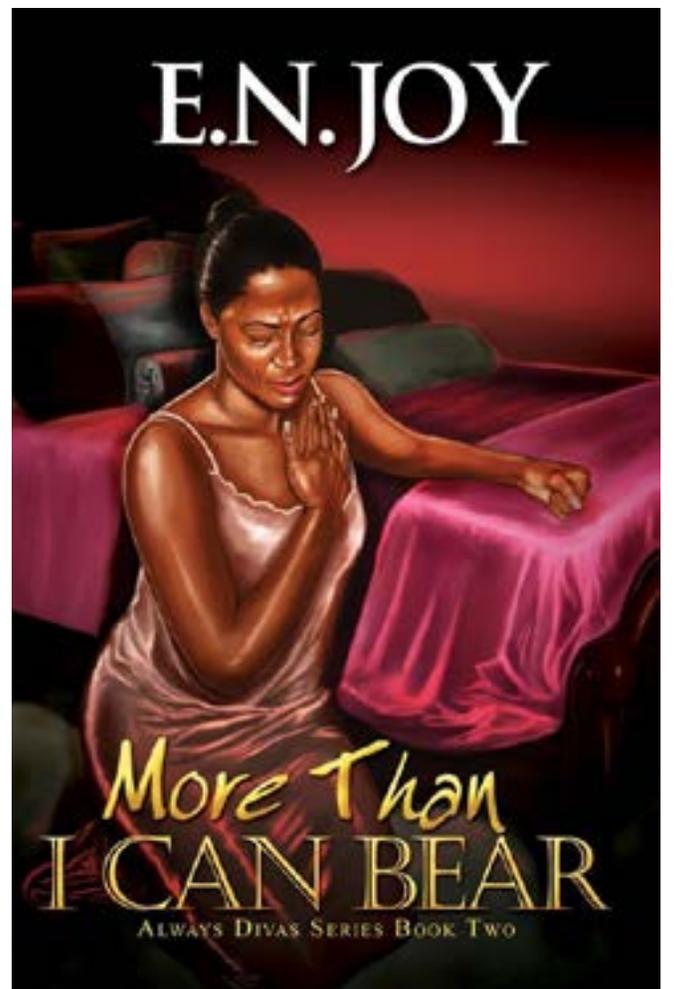
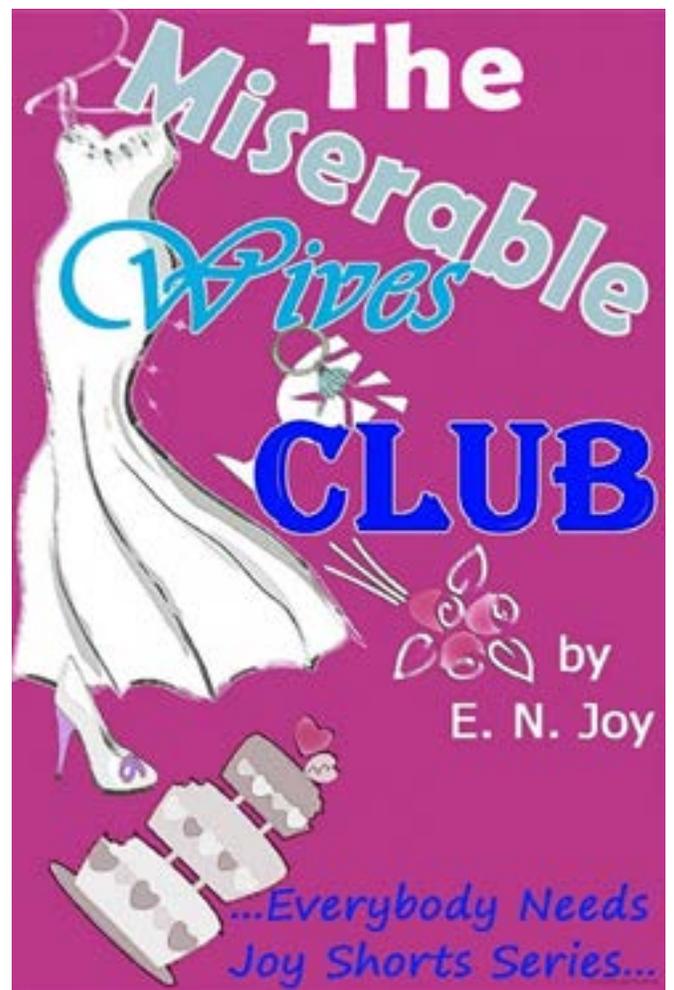
E N Joy: I think what I enjoy most is teaching other authors how to tell and sell their books by turning their book into a business. I do so through my Act Like an Author, Think Like a Business endeavor: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZKTCHcj0WQELrvfb9MLxAA>

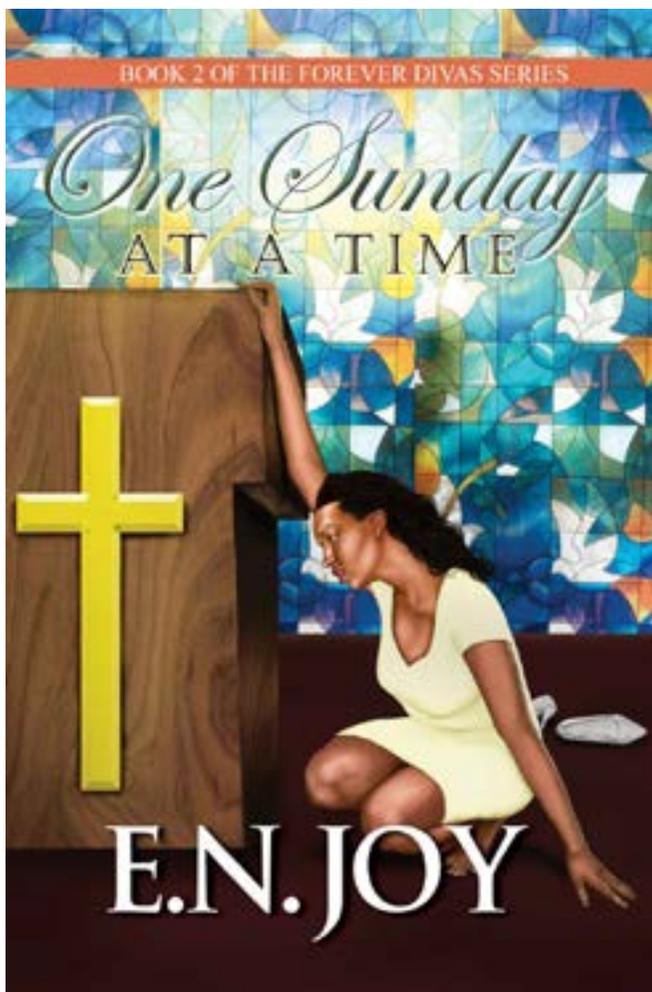
Shannan Harper: With all of the hats you wear, how do you find the time to write?

E N Joy: I make the time, and when I can't make the time, I use whatever time I have. If my children have events they need dropped off at, instead of dropping them off, going home or running errands and then returning to pick them up, I'll sit out in the car with my laptop. If I show up early to an appointment or get out of an appointment early, I'll sit in my car and utilize those extra few minutes on my laptop.

Christine Pauls: How many books have you written under Joylynn Jossell and E.N. Joy?

ENJoy: I have 18 books on my www.joylynnjossel.com website





E N Joy: I have over 30 on my www.enjoywrites.com website

Christine Pauls: WOW!

Venise Jacobs: Since you are now saved, does that mean you won't write anything other than Christian fiction or children's books?

E N Joy: If my granny or Jesus can't read it without cringing, I'm not writing it. LOL! I wrote two romantic shorts that are a little lighter than any of my Christian fiction books in the divas series.

Christine Pauls: Who are some more of YOUR favorite authors?

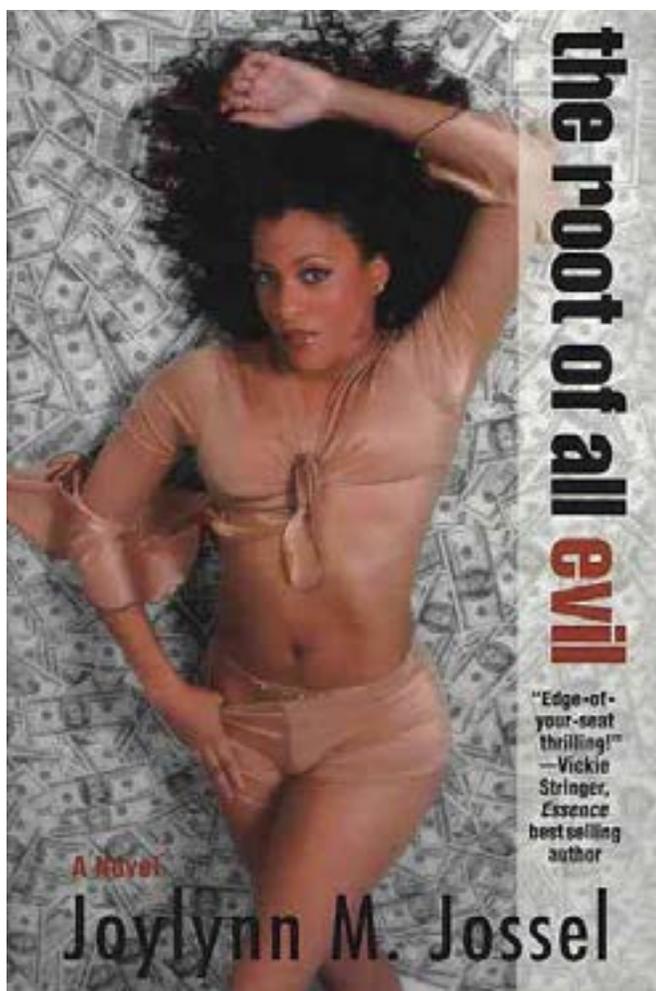
E N Joy: Bebe Moore Campbell, Brenda Jackson, Leslie Sherrod, Michelle Lindo-Rice, Nikita Lynnette Nichols, Danielle Seck, wayyyyy too many to name.

April Lachelle: Do you have a favorite book and/or character from your works?

E N Joy: I would have to say that one of my favorite books is *I Ain't Me No More*. Eighty percent of that book is based on my own life. It was tough to write at times, but talk about being delivered and set free! I was forced to pen every side of me there was; the good, bad, ugly . . . and VERY ugly.

Christine Pauls: How many authors are you an agent for? How hard is this job?

E N Joy: I have agented 17 authors. I have clients that have book deals with Simon and Schuster,



Random House/Kensington and Urban Books. All but about 4 of those authors came to me simply wanting me to edit their book, do literary consulting, a professional reading critique, or some other literary service. I was the one who asked them if they would allow me to agent their book. I rarely take unsolicited submissions. I've either worked with the author before in some capacity and know they slay (LOL!), or someone I trust has referred them to me.

E N Joy: By the way, Christine Pauls, very few people even realize I'm an agent, so I'm always open to reading submissions because I'm not sitting on some huge pile. I consider books of all genres.

Shannan Harper: What made you bring the main characters Klarke and Reo from this book into Deborah's Story in One Sunday at a Time?

E N Joy: Not all of my Joylynn M. Jossel and JOY secular fan base made the transition with me to Christian fiction. The ones who didn't, even though The Root of All Evil was published back in 2004, still ask me if I'm going to write another book with Klarke and Reo. I did write a sequel to The Root of All Evil titled When Souls Mate, but to date the readers still wanted more Klarke and Reo. So I decided to give my original Joylynn M. Jossel readers what they wanted and bring them into my new genre of writing. Some of the secular readers I'd lost actually read my Christian fiction novel, One Sunday at a Time, just to be reunited with Klarke and Reo.

Christine Pauls: Who designs your covers? Are they based on your input?

E N Joy: The book cover designer for the books in my divas series is Charlton "CP the Artist" Palmer out of Atlanta, GA. I have 100% input. I share the book synopsis with the artist, some parts of the story, and I'll even email him a scene from the book if that's the picture I want depicted on the cover. We did all of the above for the cover to More Than I Can Bear.

Christine Pauls: Talented artist.

E N Joy: Christine Pauls Yes, Charlton is amazing!!!!

Shannan Harper: Is there anyone in the literary community that you would like to collaborate with?

E N Joy: Right now I'm content with working with Nikita Lynnette Nichols, but every now and then Shelia Bell drops into my spirit. I don't know what that's about, but I'm sure God will reveal it in His timing.

Shannan Harper: May I suggest Michelle Stimpson, because that would be interesting to see Mother Doreen and Mama B together. (IJS)

E N Joy: Ha! And we thought Angel and Lady Arykah was something . . .

Shelia Bell: Wow, as you do in mine E N Joy, especially recently. I agree, God will reveal his will when He gets good 'n ready. :)

Shannan Harper: Can't wait to see what God reveals

E N Joy: Amen, Shelia Bell!

GRAPHIC DESIGNER AT YOUR SERVICE

Shannan Harper: Is there a non fiction subject you would like to tackle?

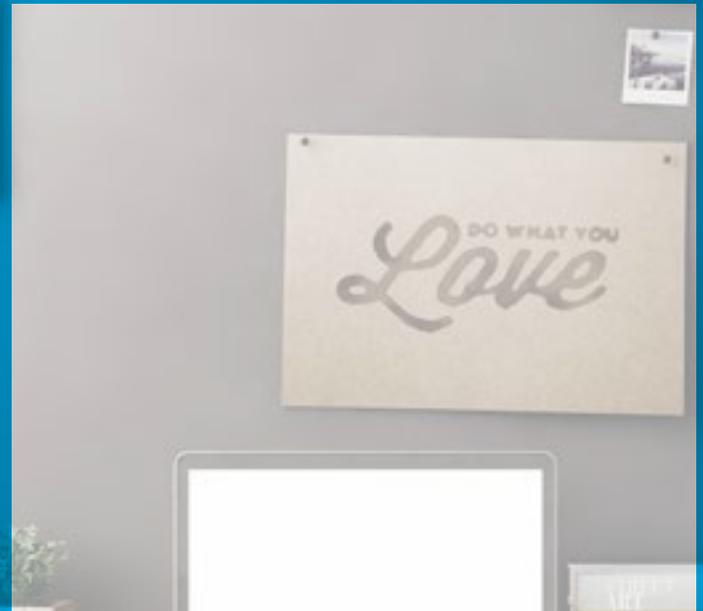
E N Joy: I've already started writing my first non-fiction book. It's titled Act Like an Author, Think Like a Business. Authors need to know that there are so many ways they can earn money from writing (their intellectual property) outside of book sales.

E N Joy: I've hid my desire to write about how crazy and bipolar and depressed and overwhelmed and anxious and and and . . . I feel sometimes in books like One Sunday at a Time. Maybe one day I won't hide behind the pen . . . or Deborah. #mentalhealthawareness

E N Joy: Thank you so much, Shannan Harper, and everyone else, for taking time out of your evening to chat with me about the very first full-length novel I ever wrote, The Root of All Evil. I enjoyed discussing other aspects of my literary journey as well. Blessings to all and have a great evening!

Shannan Harper: Please be sure to let our readers know how to stay in touch with you, including social media links.

E N Joy: To learn more about me and stay in touch, please visit my websites at www.enjoywrites.com and www.joylynnjossel.com. I'm on Facebook as Joylynn M. Ross and E N Joy.

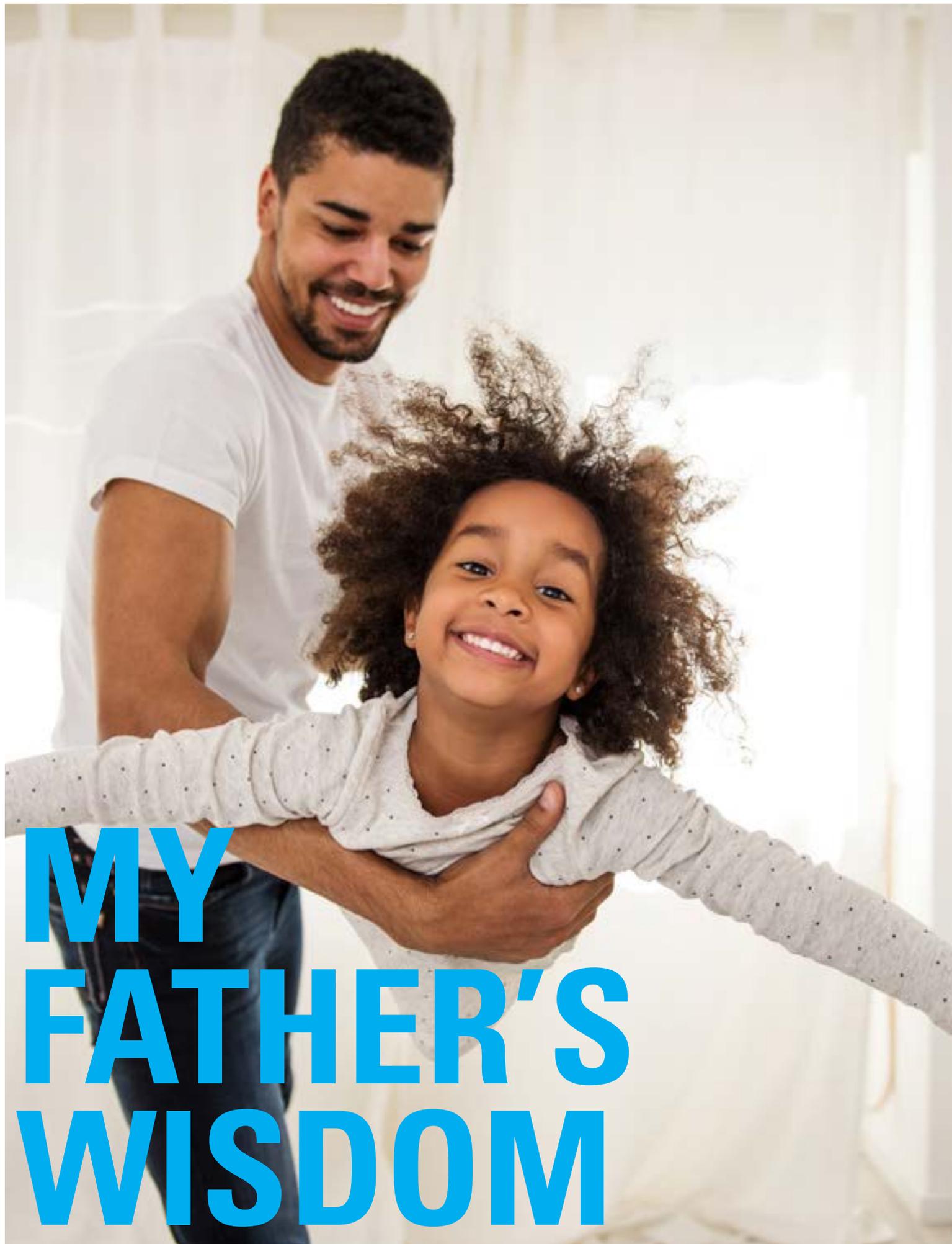


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**MY
FATHER'S
WISDOM**

Part One

Cherie Johnson

Somebody's gotta live to tell the story. Make sure it's your Black ass!

Eartha Watts Hicks

Where are my other 2 points? I was a straight A student and use to get straight 98 down my report cards. But my father would always say, "Where are my other 2 points?" So to prove a point, I decided that I was going to average 105 in every subject, by answering all my questions and my extra credit questions perfectly. That next report card, instead of averaging 105%, the gave me 100% in every subject, and promoted me 2 grades up. I had skipped a grade...just like my father. I started high school at 12 and college at 16.

Qiana Wilson

If he (a man) can't do for you like I can or better, then you don't need him.

Kim Louise

It's not a sin to get knocked down; it's a sin if you don't get back up.

Brenda McDuffie Lisbon

From my grandfather--you have an opportunity I never had, get as much education as you can

cause that is one thing the w_____ man can never take from you. Use it wisely.

Elizabeth Watts

There is no such thing as an Oil Fairy...you actually have to put oil in your car, or ask someone to do it.

LaQuista Wilhite Jones

My dad said something similar

Elizabeth Watts

Did he say it before you locked your engine? I received the info after...

Cerece Rennie Murphy

Don't buy what you want, then beg for what you need.

Menasha Edmondson Drain

Always remember, a man will f*ck you before he will feed or finance you. You can get dick anytime never worry about getting laid get paid!

Calvin Whittaker

"There are two things that you never let anyone fuck with...your name, and your credit".

Part Two

Red Summer

Don't piss on yo' pillow. I didn't know what he meant for years.

Candy Jackson

The food is ready and the taable is set, if you get up and walk away hungry, you have no one to blame but yourself. It took me a few years to realize he wasn't talking about food. #daddysgirl4ever

Jeanetta Britt

"...it's a stupid dog that bites the hand that puts the food in the bowl..."

Monica Nash

God bless the child that has his own.... (get out)!!!

Priscilla Jackson

I have never hit you. I have only used my hands/ my strength to protect and provide for you, never to punish you, so no other man has a right to do what I haven't done. And know if he hits you once, he'll hit you again. But most of all you can ALWAYS come home.

Desiree Harris

If a man ever tries to fight you, don't use what God gave you. Use with God put around you. Knock him out with it and get away from the situation.

Chase Monet

If you ain't got no money, you ain't got no say so... lol

Brigette Anissa Major

Never be afraid to ask a question. All they can say is Yes or No ... but they damn sure can't eat ya.

Paula Cadwell

You can go out here and do whatever you want with these n_ ____s, but a man will still be Mr. in the morning.

Canita Hardnett-Johnson

When I got married...my father told me, never start doing something you will not continue to do. Best advice EVER!

Donna Lee

Once you take out the garbage never bring it back in.

Roxanne Harvey

My natural father never said a word, but my heavenly Father said...TRUST ME!

Estella Stephney

Make sure your name is on the lease or mortgage.

Part Three

Stacy Hardiman

Relating to this my father once told me if your name is not on it don't put nothing in it.

Wanda Bolton

When my first date ever didn't show up, my Dad said, we'll wait an hour. Never wait more than an hour for a man. Then Dad took me out. "Don't be home after the hour passes."

Tina Merrick All from my step dad, Edward "Bud" James:

People are people, Black, White, Yellow, Red...You have good and bad in all. Accept or reject each individual on their own merit or lack of.

You will NEVER find a man that will treat you like I do, but try to find one that comes as close as possible.

Tiffani Lynn

Always stand up for yourself and if you have to physically fight, hit first and hit hard. (There are other things but that's what comes to mind first)

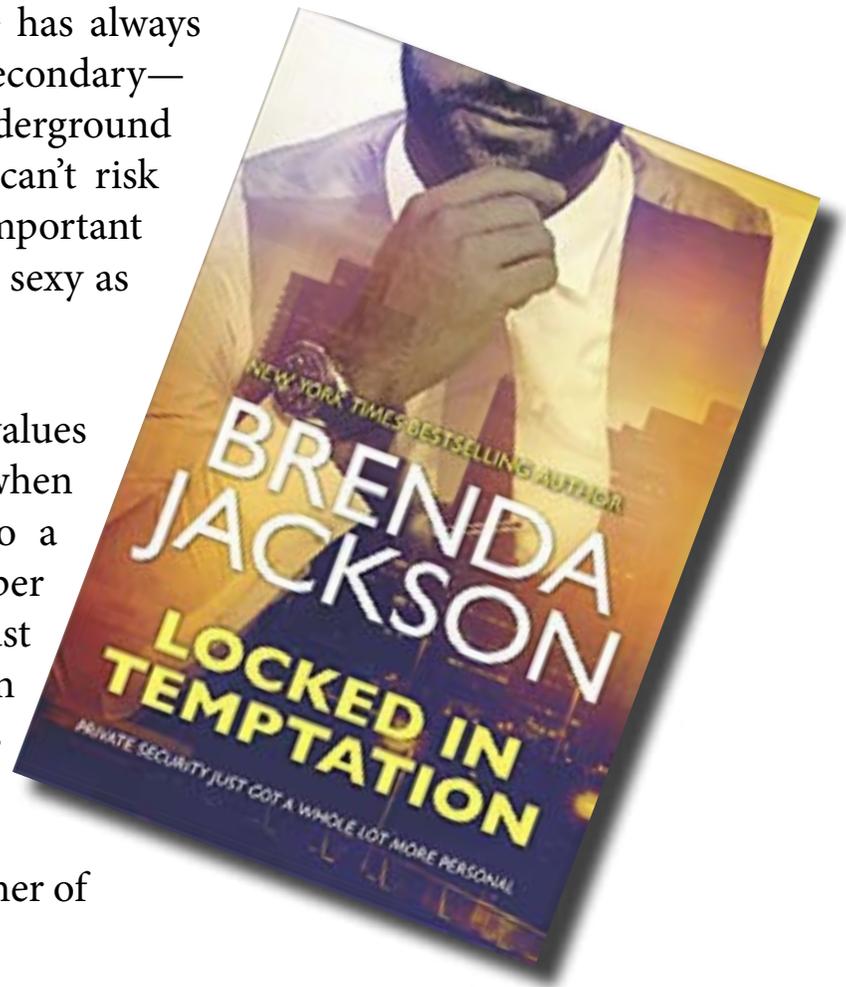
BRENDA JACKSON



**His job is to protect her ...
no matter the cost**

Police detective Joy Ingram's connection to elite security expert Stonewall Courson is instant. Undeniable. Electric. But her commitment to protect and serve has always come first. Everything else is secondary—especially when she uncovers an underground surrogate baby-making ring. Joy can't risk a distraction during the most important case of her career, not even one as sexy as reformed ex-con Stonewall.

There are few things Stonewall values more than a strong woman. But when Joy's investigation draws her into a deadly conspiracy that goes deeper than she ever imagined, he must convince her that he's the best man to protect her. And while he puts his life on the line to save hers, the insatiable attraction between them becomes the one danger neither of them can escape.



BLACK FATHERS MATTER

by: Shakir Rashaan

I WAS A FRESHMAN IN HIGH SCHOOL, sitting in my literature class when we were tasked with a project where we were to explain who were the most influential people in our lives. It was something we were supposed to delve into, really sink our teeth into, not realizing that our lit teacher was striving for something a bit more altruistic.

As I sat in my bedroom that night, at first, I couldn't figure out how to put the words together, just as I am sitting here in my writing lab now, almost thirty years later, trying to figure out how to put the words together to express myself. Contrary to popular opinion, I do have the capacity to be at a loss for words at times. (LOL).

But then the lightbulb illuminated, and my fingers flowed freely. The first line of that project was the words my father told me when I was only ten years old. He probably won't remember that he said them, but they resonated with me on a lot of levels. Looking back on them now, they

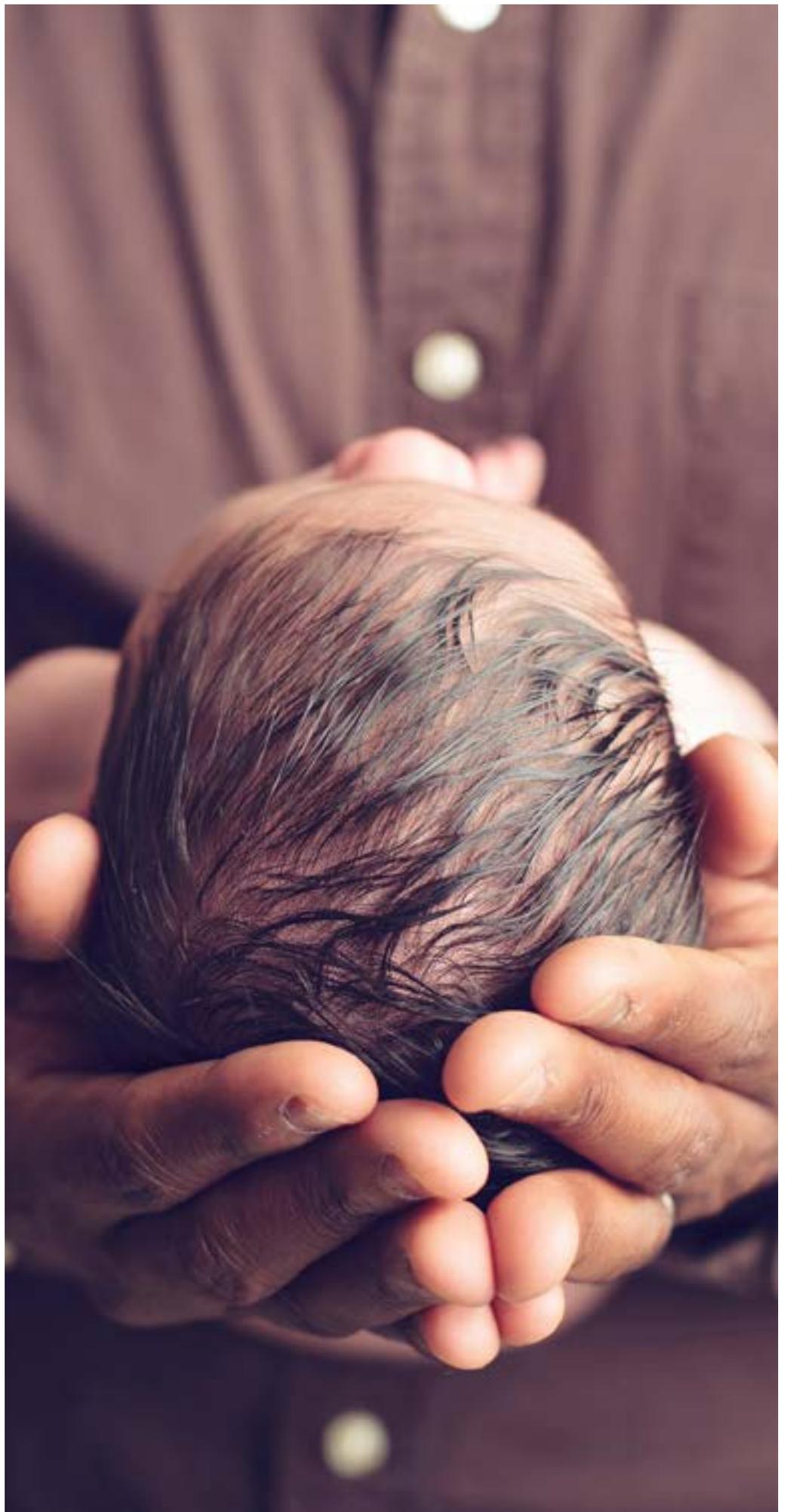
represented the investment and commitment he made in trying to be the best example of a man he could be for my sister and me.

I was named after him (well, not entirely, we have different middle names). He was that dude when I was growing up. He was a police officer when I was growing up, and he was the reason I wanted to be in law enforcement—until life took me in another direction. I mimicked his mannerisms, his voice inflections, took on his ability to talk loud and draw crowds whenever we went out places. When my voice deepened, and family members couldn't tell the difference between him and me when they called our house, it was a source of pride for me as a teenager.

***“You and your sister
are the best things
I’ve ever produced...”***

Then, he said the words that I found myself saying to my own kids, something that helped me redefine my individuality. "Don't try to be like me, be better than me." I didn't know what that meant at the time, but I know what it means now that I have my own children that I'm trying to help raise to be the best individuals they can possibly be.

Unfortunately, in the Black community, there are throngs of people, regardless of gender, who cannot say they have a great relationship with their fathers. Hell, the music industry isn't exactly favorable when it comes to depicting fathers. Television did pick up the slack, though: Cliff Huxtable (The Cosby Show), James Evans (Good Times), Carl Winslow (Family Matters), Philip Banks (Fresh Prince of Bel Air), Lester Banks (227), Fred Sanford (Sanford and Son), George Jefferson (The Jeffersons), even in present day with Dre Johnson (Blackish), Lucious Lyon (Empire), Robert Jebediah Freeman (The Boondocks) ... I



know I'm leaving a lot of men out of this mix, but you're picking up what I'm putting down, right?

However, stepping away from Hollywood, the sobering reality isn't as clear as those would have people believe. Fathers are stepping up, a lot more than what is being reported or shown in the media. Sure, there are those who might fall short, but that doesn't mean that all of us can be lumped into that category. And yes, there are those of us who have great relationships with our fathers, I'm a standing testament to that.

I also had uncles, past and present, who helped shape me as the man I am today. They taught me how to fire a gun (well, my father first put the gun in my hand—LOL), how to play basketball and baseball, how to fish, how to talk to girls, the list goes on and on. I had two grandfathers, both of whom left an indelible mark on me in their own unique ways before they passed away. They provided me with the edge that I have when it comes to my storytelling ability and the sharp wit that can have me shred you to pieces without uttering a profane word or an insult to your character. I was lucky to have those men in my life, and they all played a part in the man you see now.

Getting back to that project for my literature class, the other part of what we had to do was read what we'd written in front of the class. I couldn't get through the entire thing without shedding a few tears, finally realizing the point of

the project: remembering that it takes a village to raise a child. In my particular case, it took a tribe of men to raise this idealistic little boy into a man with children of his own.

I've done my best to be the best father I can be to my son and daughter. There have been ups and downs, head-scratching moments, and there will probably still be those moments (I have teenagers, after all. LOL). But those words that my father said to me, my grandfathers, my uncles, I find myself saying those same things to my kids; from the absolute comical to the intensely serious. It's not always easy being a father, but it's not supposed to be easy. If fatherhood was easy, it would be taken for granted. Sadly, that might be the distinction: it's easy to have kids, but putting in the work and investing the little lives that have been produced—that's being a father.

So, for this Father's Day, I would tell those children who are now adults who didn't always have a father around when they were growing up: remember "Uncle B", or "Paw-Paw", or "Mr. Xavier" who was always helping your mother with different things around the house when she needed help. Sometimes, that tribe of men, that circle of testosterone, helped in ways that you couldn't see when you were growing up. They might not have been blood-related, but they might have helped, in their own unique ways, to get you from adolescence to adulthood, and were rooting for you the whole way.



Honoring My Quiet Giant

by: Pat G'Orge-Walker

So many times I've heard someone say that there is no such thing as "love at first sight." I disagree.

My "love at first sight" appeared in 1976 when I was working as both a NYCTA transit clerk and an entertainer. I worked the 3-11pm tour on Rockaway Avenue on Brooklyn, New York's "A" line. It was quite common to have several transit cops or, at times, the anti-crime undercover around or inside my booth. It wasn't particularly allowed, but I always figured having them around meant the holdup guys wouldn't be willing to test the waters.

One particular night, several of the Anti-crime unit guys at my site. Several of them always felt it was their duty and right to tease me, ask me out or just downright play "big brother and protector." All the guys were doing their usual teasing routine except one. I wasn't bothered by his standoffishness at first. We'd never seen each other before. Well, at least I hadn't seen him. As time went by and it was nearing the end of my shift, I needed them to leave so I could prepare the booth for the person coming to relieve me. To this day, I don't know what made me do it I told everyone, "Get out!"

Looking at the quiet one, I added, "Not you. You need to stay. Obviously, you have a problem."

In my mind, I was a size six prize package with a lot of sass in my game. With all that beauty and brains and this fella hadn't bothered to even throw his hat in the same ring of what all the other men were after. The man was tall and built the way I liked—not too muscular but looked like he could handle himself when and if the need arose. Perfect combination.

Long story short, the Quiet Guy remained seated on the booth stool. The other guys left and from that night on Robert Walker, Jr., remained my friend, my lover and ultimately, my husband.

Life with this quiet dude eventually was everything but quiet. Many years had passed before I

discovered that he led another life that was filled with danger. He went from being just a highly decorated NYCTA Anti-crime detective to being an Investigator for the Justice Department, FBI and ultimately a major part of the NYC Joint Terrorist Task Force team. I didn't know he struggled to keep my three daughters who were ages 9, 8 and 4 and me from becoming involved in anything that would harm us.

The way I found out was something that could have come from a dime-store novel. Robert came to practically all of my shows, and he'd step in and take the girls wherever they needed to go. When he went out of town or was on overnight assignments, I simply took it as just a part of his job at Anti-Crime. All the crazy disguises including once looking like a bum never fazed me. Until I received the call. Rob was going onto a level of security where I had to be interviewed before it was granted. Of course, I thought it was a joke. In fact, anyone who knows me would understand that I always joke. I found out it was no laughing matter when I received a call from Rob. "You just couldn't answer the questions without cutting up, could you?" Oops! From that point on, I took things seriously because I soon discovered investigative work was also no laughing matter. My husband was what was called a "Loaner." He was so good at investigating he was often sent to work cases within the Justice Department that sometimes called for him to go deep undercover.

One such case was the investigation and arrest of the 1993 World Trade Center bombers. My quiet giant and his team brought them

to justice. He was recognized by then United States Attorney General, Jo White. Another case involved his participation in the Brinks Robbery in which again, he went undercover. The case involving the Queens Bombing Factory was an experience I wasn't aware of until he received an award. I was fuming but still proud. There were other times when no matter how hard he tried to keep me from worrying, there were other forces at work that wouldn't allow for that. For instance, I remember waking up to the news on the radio about a shoot-out in Brooklyn. I just knew Rob was involved. I called his command, and although they told me he was okay, I wouldn't believe them. I was finally convinced when Rhymer, one of the other guys I'd known for years, said it was true. Sadly, although Rob wasn't hurt, his partner Juwann had been.

However, in 1992 "it" happened. My husband was shot. I'd had a premonition that something wasn't right because moments before that call came through I'd fallen to my knees in prayer. A short time later, New York's Jamaica Hospital was packed with FBI, Transit Police, NYPD and clergy. Oddly, I kept my head and took such detailed notes to the point that it was the JTTF that came to me for my notes.

Through the years, there were other moments of close-calls and unbelievable cases of which I can't go into detail. All in all, none of it was as impressive to me as my husband's walk with God. You see, Robert Walker, Jr., was also Deacon Robert Walker, Jr. If ever there was a man who loved God as my husband did, I have yet to meet

him. Rob was the sort that if you were hungry, you'd never want him to pray over a meal. You'd starve before he finished. It wasn't that he was long-winded just for the sake of being long-winded. My husband took every opportunity to talk to God about everything ... even down to blessing the food. He was the go-to deacon in our church. The pastor's right hand and the man the young people always looked up to and respected highly. His favorite scripture was Psalm 37:25, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." My quiet giant clung ferociously to his belief that he had a big God that would honor his faithfulness and service and take care of me, and our children, grandchildren, and great grand.

One of our greatest tests of faith came in 2005 on my husband's birthday. He'd gone back and forth to doctors about a year complaining of a pain in his ribs and other parts. He was told that he must've bruised a rib. That day, September 21, 2005, proved otherwise. My husband was told he had cancer—Multiple Myeloma. We'd never heard of such a cancer. My husband took it in stride. Not me. I immediately broke down and gave God a list of about ten other people who I deemed more worthy of such a disastrous diagnosis.

My husband went through chemo, radiology, stem-cell transplant and other treatments and in 2008 he went into remission. The following year, 2009 it was my turn. I was diagnosed with cancer. However, unlike Rob, I never took a pill, chemo, or radiation—surgery was all. The fact

that it was discovered that the cancer had lay inside me since 1986 to this day still amazes me. I still cannot understand why God allowed this gentle giant to go through the misery of a cancer treatment and that I didn't have that type of experience.

April 2013, Rob was told his kidneys were failing, and he would need dialysis. He never murmured. I did, but not to him. He still wouldn't complain. He went through that procedure three times a week. Often he would pass out, and several of my neighbors would rush to lift him into the house. Our youngest daughter, who is a Registered Nurse, relocated from North Carolina to help with his care. There wasn't anything our daughters wouldn't do for Rob.

On August 18, 2013, I received "that call" around nine in the morning. His kidney doctor told me to get him to the hospital immediately. He was in the process of dying. I was floored, but there was nothing I could do but comply. I remember Rob asking me, "Am I dying?" I didn't pull any punches and told him, "Yes. The doctor says you are. But I want you to fight." One thing Rob and I always had between us was honesty. We never lied to one another, no matter how much it might hurt.

Rob didn't panic. Instead, he told me to call the precinct and tell them to come and get all the guns out of the house. I don't think I would've thought of that. Yet, he lay dying and still protecting me was on his mind. Because Rob was sort of a celebrity with the local police, several

of them raced over. They came into the bedroom and after I turned over the guns and ammunition I was asked to leave the room. I later found out that the officers were so overcome with emotion that they didn't want me to witness any parts of that experience. They talked to him about the "job" until the ambulance arrived and then several went to the hospital with us.

Almost a month later, I received the final call very early in the morning. I'd been up most of the night because Rob was coming home for hospice and I needed to get things prepared—which included oxygen and so many other things to make the stay comfortable. I raced to the hospital and found him waiting for me. I'd already notified our pastor and his siblings. They arrived shortly after I did. The daughters were at work and were trying to make it to the hospital. Rob was able to talk to them over the phone and told them not to come. He'd be going home that day. I thought he meant he was coming home to our physical house, but he knew better.

Throughout that day, I saw my gentle giant fight the final battle. He and I sang his favorite song, "Break Every Chain." We prayed until the Holy Ghost took over the room. He kept repeating how much he loved me. He apologized for having to leave me. I, in turn, told him how much I loved him then and always would. I thanked him for loving me like Christ loved the church. We chatted for as long as we could and then the death rattle came.

I'd heard it before when my eldest brother lay

dying so I knew exactly what it was. I saw him thrash about, trying to rip off the leg monitors that monitored his pressure. Several times his eyes would roll back but he always came back, and each time he said, "I love you." My sister-in-law later mentioned to me that he told her during the time I'd left to use the bathroom or leave the room, "I love my wife."

When the moment came, I cradled Rob in the crook of my arm and kissed his forehead. With my free hand, I placed two fingers on his wrist and felt his pulse dwindle until his eyes lost its light. His lips and feet suddenly turned ice cold. He was pronounced dead, and I had kept my promise to him ... "Until death do we part."

I look at the world we now live in, and at times I'm saddened. Most of the time I'm so proud of my Gentle Giant Robert Walker, Jr., who along with so many others, will never be known put their lives on the line to keep this country safe.

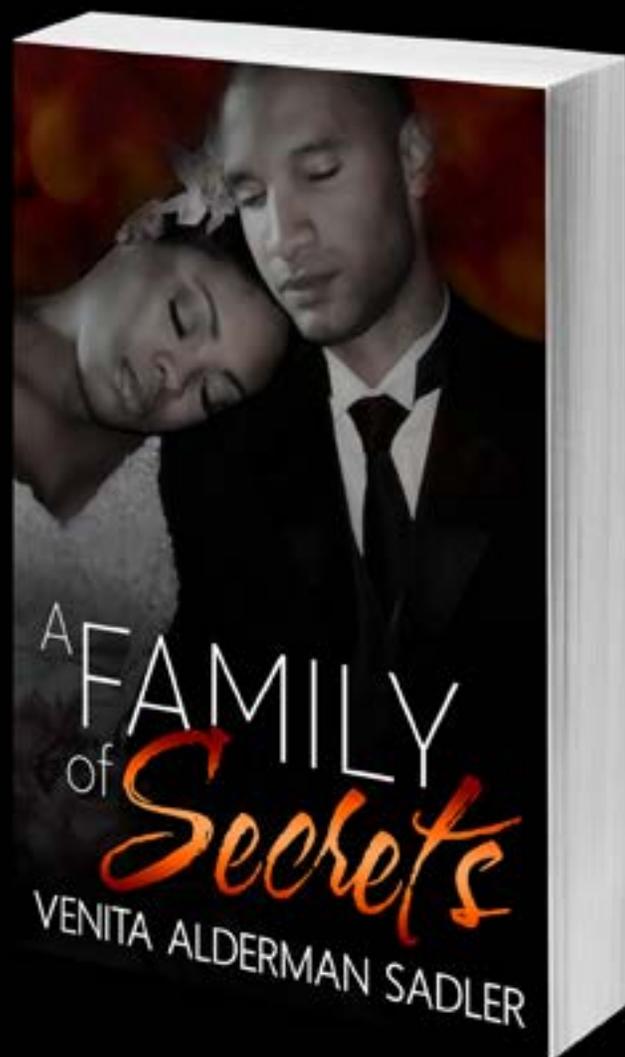
I pray we don't squander their efforts.

Rest in peace my beloved
Robert Walker, Jr. 1943-2013.

Renee is marrying her high school sweetheart Malik who she had to literally fight to get. Even though they have been together for years; both of them and their families have secrets.

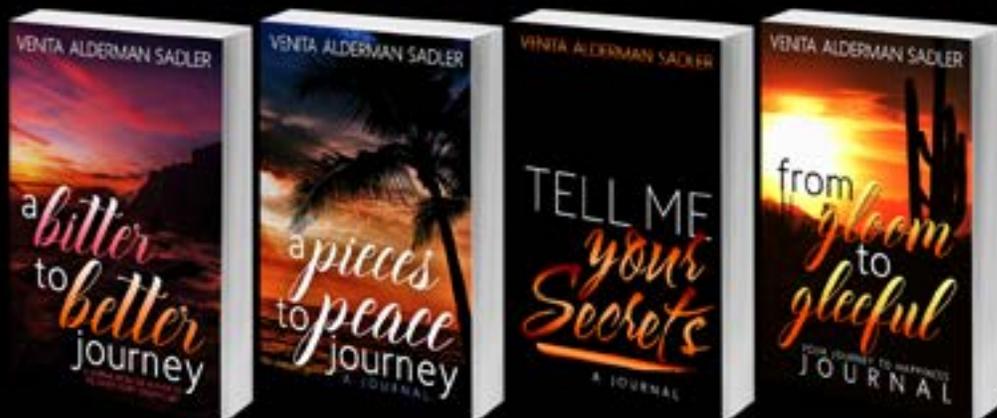
Renee is trying to keep it together after learning of her family's betrayal, her payback can be deadly because she doesn't handle disloyalty well.

Malik is trying his best to stay alive and keep all his secrets hidden. Will he learn that some secrets should never be kept and how lies can get you killed?



Check out my stories in these anthologies...

Turning Trials Into Triumphs
All I Want For Christmas
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The Joy of Being a Husband and Father

By: Sean Nash, Esq.

The joy is in the way my wife looks at me, like I am the sexiest beast alive (even when I know after looking at photos that I am now more “Dad bod” than “stud”)

So I’m sitting at my desk on a lovely Monday morning, going through my normal routine. I’ve got my coffee in hand, and I’m feeling great after the successful book signing event that launched my first book co-authored with my beautiful wife called “Do You Love Me Still...? How We Made It Through Our First Seven Years Of Marriage and Beyond”. I check my Facebook page as I usually do each early morning, this time looking for reactions to the event that occurred over the weekend. Suddenly, I receive a message from my friend and prolific best-selling author Naleighna Kai. She congratulates me on the launch of my book and asks me if I would be willing to write a “page or two” on the joys of being a husband and a father for her e-magazine. I reply, “Sure, that shouldn’t be a problem.” I figured that, as a husband and father of seventeen blessed years and having just co-written a book on what it takes to be a good husband and father; I could punch something out real quick to support a friend offering her support in return. A couple of days later, I began to type.

And that’s when I realized to myself, “Oh sh*t!” What had I gotten myself into?

Such a simple question, but I realized that the answer is not as simple. I mean, my wife and I wrote about the various attributes people need to establish to have a stable marriage and family—commitment, communication, loyalty, intimacy, humility, and sacrifice, among others. But I realized that we had not discussed the

joys of being a spouse and parent. What does that look like? Anybody who is a committed spouse and/or parent knows that it is not easy. It takes work. And money, lots of money (for those who are curious, my kids are currently \$489,395.59 in the hole ... per kid). There is nothing harder to accomplish—or redeeming—than being a good husband and father. I have done many things of which I am proud. I grew up on the west side of Chicago (yes, that west side that everyone hears about in the news) and managed to go to Stanford and Northwestern Law School. But there is nothing more gratifying or rewarding than my relationship with my wife and kids.

Is the joy in the work you put in to have a happy spouse and family? Nah. That's just hard work. Rewarding? Yes. Joy-inducing? Not so much. Is joy derived from seeing your spouse and children achieve ultimate success? Nope. As I say to my family all the time, I expect their successes, not their failures. That is what you are supposed to do! That is what you work so hard for in the first place! Besides, there are other considerations. You can do everything the right way and say all the right things at every turn, and your kid or spouse can still go in a different direction. Nothing is guaranteed! Will you not be able to derive joy if your wife and children are unsuccessful?

So where is the joy? Reading those first couple of paragraphs might make you think that marriage and children are for the birds. But before you take that anti-depressant (side effects may include inability to swallow), there is light at the end of the tunnel (no Loony Tunes train ... I promise!). The joy is hard to describe and varies for every person, but it is a type of joy that is felt in the deepest way.

The joy of being a husband and father is life. It's a lifetime of memories you share, from the day you met, to "I do," to the very first time you hold your child. It's the goofy selfies and videos we do together as a family. It's the family trips, the laughs in the kitchen over breakfast. Joy is celebrating graduations, proms, the milestone anniversaries. Joy is watching my girls ride their bikes without training wheels for the first time. The joy is being able to experience and share these moments surrounded with love. Joy is getting my boogie in with my wife and kids on Saturday mornings while making pancakes (and trying to figure out which of my wife's and kids tunes I need to add to my iPod). Joy is taking a pause from typing this article because my youngest daughter wants to hang and watch the NBA Finals with me.

The way my children view me as everything right and good in this world so unconditionally that it makes me strive to be exactly what they see.

The joy of being a husband and father is also love. The way my children view me as everything right and good in this world so unconditionally that it makes me strive to be exactly what they see. It's being able to look into my wife's eyes and see the very first time I heard her voice. It's having people around you that believe in you infinitely more than you ever believed in yourself. The joy is in the long silent hug—because it's the only space you can imagine feeling loved and safe right in that moment. It's watching my now teen girls tell me they are proud of me as a Dad. It's in the moments when I help my wife Dorian

shine and watch her soar. It's in those holiday cookouts and dinners you host as a family, which always end up with rooms and rooms of laughter, music, and hugs (We might throw some bones or slap some spades too). It's in the movie nights, the board games, the junk food nights, the group hugs. It's the heartfelt love through good and bad. The joy is in the way my wife looks at me, like I am the sexiest beast alive (even when I know after looking at photos that I am now more "Dad bod" than "stud"). The joy is causing that spine-tingling arousal because I know that one special spot on her that only I can reach.

The joy is also laughs. Randomly gathering in a room just because you want to be near each other and cracking jokes on each other (Note: In a moment of ultimate confirmation, as I took a break from typing this paragraph, we did this very thing!). Laughing and riffing on some Instagram or current event. It's laughing at each other's flubs, flaws, and blooper moments because we don't just know each other's heart, we are each other's heart. The stories we make up when we are people watching while on an outing. It's laughing at the corniest of jokes because it came from your family and you know exactly why that person told that joke. It's that hearty belly laughter because it was elicited so naturally from you. The joy is in losing all sense of shame just to get a laugh from my wife and kids!

But most importantly, to me, the joy of being a husband and father is exhibited most through the pain. It's watching my wife go through immeasurable pain and agony (twice!) just to bring a piece of me into this world. It's in kissing my girls' skinned knees and letting them know they will always be okay. It's in having my wife

greet me every morning and end every night with a hug, kiss, and encouragement when I have gone months looking for a job to support the family. It's in watching the girls console and encourage each other through tough times. The joy is in wanting

The joy of being a husband and father is *life*. It's a lifetime of memories you share, from the day you met, to "I do," to the very first time you hold your child.

to be the one to ease the pain from every hurt, every rejection, every setback, and every stumble. It's in never wanting to see my wife hurt or cry alone. It's in offering love and support for each other when one experiences loss.

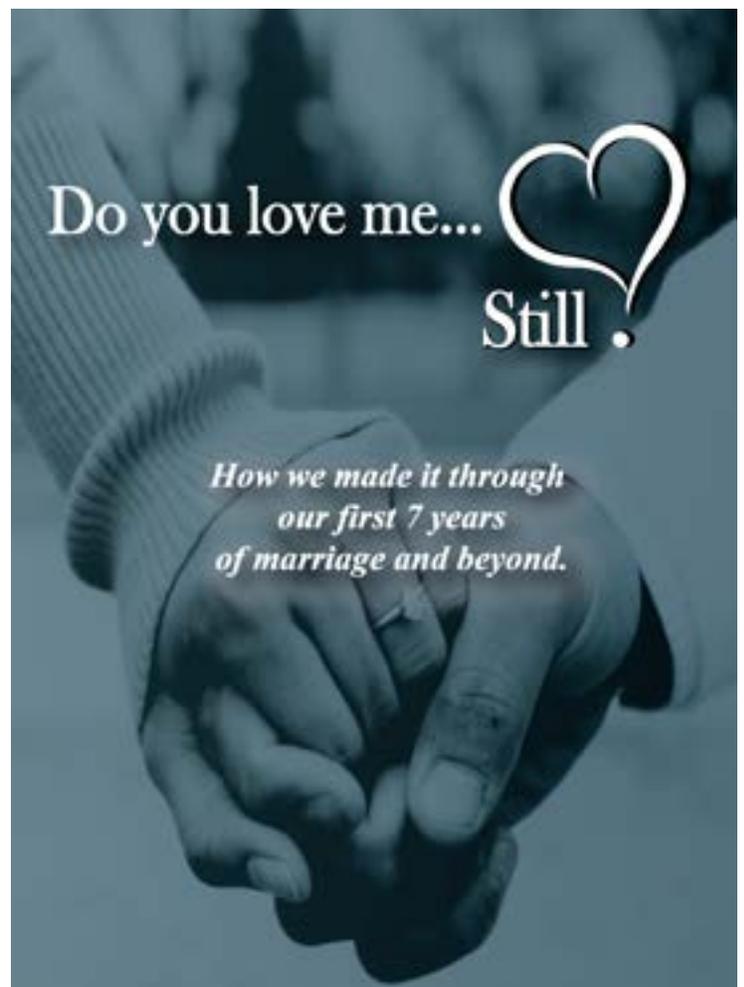
The joy I describe is based on events that are particular and personal to me. But I think everyone can conjure moments and memories in their lives that exhibit aspects of joy that I try to describe above. Ultimately the joy is in the moment, good or bad. Live in that moment. Always strive to find the joy in those moments, whether you are responsible for providing the joy or are basking in it. Be present. If you do, you too will experience the joy of being a spouse and parent.



Sean and Dorian H. Nash have been married over seventeen years and have two beautiful daughters, Taylor and Maya. Today, remaining in love and married is a feat unto itself which they believe after seventeen years together qualifies them to have a voice about relationships and marriage. Sean and Dorian offer their unique perspective because as they put it, “We fell in love with each other’s hearts before we laid eyes on one another.” They believe what makes their relationship extraordinary is the commitment they made to each other to put the work in everyday for their relationship. Sean has been a practicing attorney for almost 20 years. Dorian is the founder and creator of Feed Your Spirit Media, LLC and a Blogger of the same name. Dorian is also a playwright, writing stories that speak to all humanity.

Do You Love Me ... Still?

A relationship, like a house, needs a solid foundation to succeed, like trust and communication. More than ever, we need practical steps to build an extraordinary relationship. “Do You Love Me ... Still? How We Made it through the first 7 Years of Marriage And Beyond”. Written by The Extraordinary Everyday Marriage Duo, Sean and Dorian H. Nash, believe that most relationships can be extraordinary if the



partners are willing to put in the work. Join them as they take the reader on a journey through the “soundtrack” of their love story. Using the analogy of building a home, they provide practical, easy to understand guidance and tips on what it takes to sustain a life-long commitment to one other.

Join this everyday couple as they share their personal vignettes and the lessons they have learned along the way about relationships, parenting, and each other. They provide an in-depth and easy road map through the obstacles couples face every day while blending their mutual love for music with their love story. For more information, please visit our website at www.doyoulovemestill.com

TRIBUTE TO MY FATHER

by: Angela Kay Austin

“PEEWEE” IS WHAT THEY CALLED MY POP because he was the runt of his brothers. The tiniest of six, and he fought against that every day. My father refused to allow anything to hold him back. Standing over six feet by the time he reached adulthood, Pop was not a man that many would test physically, but some would and he accepted every challenge. And as he told the stories to me, he won them all.

My father used his size and strength to provide for his family. Unfortunately, engaging in physical work took its toll over the years, and by the time Pop reached his sixties, his body had begun to give out on him. But not his mind. He remained feisty and straight-forward. Pop never allowed anyone or anything to forget he was in a room.

I always say that my mother was the calm to his storm. I am still baffled on how they became

one and lasted until her death. But, even that didn't keep them apart for long. He followed her eight months later.

What Pop left as his legacy to my brother and me is one of the simplest of things—faith in ourselves. Since I developed into a tall, full-lipped thin woman, I was hard to believe that I was beautiful, but I tell everyone I did believe. Why? Because my Pop told me so. He would say, “Daughter, we're pretty.” Then smile. I'd wipe away a tear and forget about the boys who told me my eyes were too big or I was too skinny. Screw them, what did they know?

Father's Day. What does it mean to me? It means remembering a man who gave me the balls to walk into a room full of strangers, pull up a chair at a bar and strike up a conversation. If they turned away, he gave me the courage to say “I don't give a damn” to keep it moving.

Grace and delicate beauty are traits that come straight from my mama. Strength and courage. That's how I remember Pop.

Enjoy this Excerpt from ...

National Best-Selling Author of

*Every WOMAN
WANTS
Her Wife*

*The
Pleasures
All Mine*

a novel by **Naleighna Kai**

Pierce finally managed to reach Marie after they'd arrived at Southampton Hospital.

"Oh my God. I'm freaking out here," she shrieked. "What happened to Eric?"

"Marie, calm down. Try to get here as soon as possible. They can't treat him until you do."

"Let me talk to him."

Pierce turned back and looked through the window at Eric. "He's not in a position to talk right now."

Behind him, a nurse came. "Sir? Sir? We need to ask you some questions."

"Marie, I'll call you back."

"Don't let him die, Pierce."

"I'll call you back, Marie." He followed the nurse to Eric's room and stood at his bedside.

Dr. Kotis, an olive-skinned man with a slight build and grey eyes, turned away from Eric to focus on the older man. "Are you his father?"

Pierce was stunned by the question. No, he wasn't the father of Raven's son. That man had never been in the picture.

"Sir?"

Eric was awake, but barely coherent. "Dad, Mom, Marie, Avie. God. God." Eric pointed to Pierce, grasped his hand. "Dad. Dad."

"He pointed toward the door, asking for you," said Dr. Kotis.

The nurse leaned toward Eric. “Does your father have permission to consent to treatment?”

Eric tightened his grip on Pierce’s hand, sending a silent message giving Pierce the right to step in. “Dad Pierce. Dad Pierce.”

Pierce took Eric’s hand. He felt the slight pressure as Eric tried to convey his message.

“We wasted all this time waiting for someone else? Why didn’t you say you were his father?”

“Yes. Dad. Dad!” Eric shrieked. “God, Marie, Mom, Dad, Pierce, Avie. Love,” Eric chanted.

“Okay, Eric, I get it.” Then to the nurse, he said, “Yes, I’m his father.”

Dr. Kotis continued, “There’s a procedure we could use on your son. It hasn’t been done here, but if we can’t do a craniotomy, it’s his only chance. The presenters, Drs. Kassam and Snyderman, are at a hospital about twenty-four miles away lecturing on the procedure. I was there when they paged me for this.”

The nurse handed Pierce a form attached to a clipboard.

“Somebody explain what it is they’re going to do,” he said, flicking a gaze over the documents. “What kind of procedures am I agreeing to?”

* * *

Four hours later, Pierce walked to the chapel, sat in one of the middle pews, and took stock of the place—stained-glass windows, bright wooden pews, plush red carpet. He hadn’t set foot in a church, or anything like it, since Jaylon Ripley’s funeral and before that, it was for his own parents’ funeral. Though his father had taught him from the bible, his parents weren’t too keen on organized religion, thanks to his mother’s father, a minister who had been the driving force in letting his pedophile

brother remain in the family circle

Pierce leaned forward on the bench, resting his chin on his steepled fingers. “God, I haven’t really spoken to you since my parents died, so I’m just going to speak from the heart. My parents were everything to me. And I couldn’t understand why, with all the bad people in the world, including the drunk driver that killed them, you would pluck two of the most beautiful flowers in the garden.”

Pierce stilled himself against the pain that penetrated his heart.

“And now, the lives of two people I love so very much are hanging in the balance. I’m not going to make promises about going to church every Sunday, but I will promise that every single morning from here on out, I’ll acknowledge Your power, presence, and guiding hand in my life—with some type of prayer or affirmation.”

Pierce closed his eyes as mental pictures of Eric, then Raven, flashed before him. “I know that everyone has a path they must travel in this life. I’m not asking to interfere with that. I’m praying for a speedy healing and recovery if it’s in the master plan, and a... painless transition if that’s...”

Pierce closed his eyes against the pain that rippled through his chest. Oh, God, his Raven. Eric.

“I need her. She needs him. I need him. He called me...Dad.” His voice broke then, tears blinded his vision. “He put major decisions about his life into my hands, power that belongs in Your hands.” Pierce gathered his thoughts, trying to push away the pain. “I never thought I’d experience love, and then Raven dropped in.”

Pierce failed in an effort to smile. “Despite the fact that I like my life organized and orderly, you sent me a woman who is total chaos. I love home-cooked meals, and you sent me a woman who says it’s against her religion to cook on weekends and weekdays.” He shifted on the wooden bench, wiping away a stream of tears. He had cried more since knowing Raven than he had his entire life. At first he never allowed himself to feel, to let anything touch him. Now feeling is what drove him, what made him know he was alive,

that life was more than just about the blood coursing through his veins. “You sent me a woman who’s afraid to let me in and love her, and I didn’t even realize that loving her unconditionally was what I needed to do most.”

Pierce lowered his head, fighting against the wracking sobs that begged for release. “I always believed we had time to make things right. And all that pride and—whatever—doesn’t matter.” Rubbing his bare head, he conceded, “I know exactly what I need to do. I’ll move my ass—um, butt—to Chicago the moment Raven’s well enough to travel. No more of this stubbornness, no more being uncompromising, no more not being there for her.”

Pierce’s words echoed in the quiet chapel.

“Finally, if I had to ask for anything for myself, it’s strength. Give me the strength to deal with whatever comes my way. My greatest prayer is for them to be here, but I know that everything is according to Divine Order and that might mean...” Pierce let out a long, slow breath. “Give me the strength to handle this. Give me the strength to help in whatever way I’m needed.” He clasped his hands and let out another breath, sniffing back the remaining tears. “Okay, God, I think that’s about it.”

Pierce sensed someone behind him. He opened his eyes and turned to see the chaplain standing near the doors.

“How long have you been standing there?”

“Oh, about since, ‘God, I haven’t really spoken to you...’.”

Pierce nodded. He wouldn’t feel the least bit ashamed. Only Eric, Raven, and Ava had shown spiritual awareness—not a holier-than-thou, my-way-is-the-only-way take on religion. He was still studying the books Ava and Eric had given him and trying to get a handle on things. And it was the only reason he was here, trying to make the connection to God once again.



Evelyn Palfrey's Chocolate Chat

We welcome national bestselling author, Evelyn Palfrey, to Naleighna Kai's Literary Cafe. Ms. Palfrey, a native Texan, writes romantic suspense for the 'marvelously mature' and issues that are relevant to the middle passage of life--and is having a ball doing it. She is the author of *The Price of Passion* (a #1 *Essence* bestseller), *Everything in Its Place*, and *Three Perfect Men*, and was a contributor to two *Chicken Soup* books. She is an attorney, a gardener, and an avid motor homer.

Evelyn Palfrey: Y'all forgive me if I'm a little slow and chunky. Been in the garden all evening. Harvesting Brussels sprouts and Swiss chard, planting potatoes ahead of threatened storm. We're under a tornado watch here in Austin.

NK: That's quite all right. *The Price of Passion* . . . this line: "Does it have a name?" Vivian asked Walter. What would be the proper question to ask her husband of nearly twenty years, when he brings home his illegitimate baby as casually as a bag of groceries? This line right here sold the entire book for me. What made you write this particular storyline?

Evelyn Palfrey: Well, Naleighna, you know I

write romances for the 'marvelously mature'. I tried to think of the worst dilemma that a middle-aged, long-married woman could have.

Ka'Lu Carter Underwood: And that would be it!

Edwina Putney: That stunned me.

Evelyn Palfrey: I figured your husband of many years bringing home a baby would be it.

NK: No joke. My heart stopped and it hurt so bad for her.

Evelyn Palfrey: Actually it was going to be a courtroom drama. A beautiful heroine, defense lawyer, gets Vivian off a murder charge. Temp insanity defense. But you remember, she just wouldn't kill Walter. I talked to that chick all night

long, trying to get her to stab him with that piece of glass She just wouldn't do it. So, I just gave up and went with what the heck that silly chick was doing =:)

NK: What was the reception from women who read this book, and this subject matter?

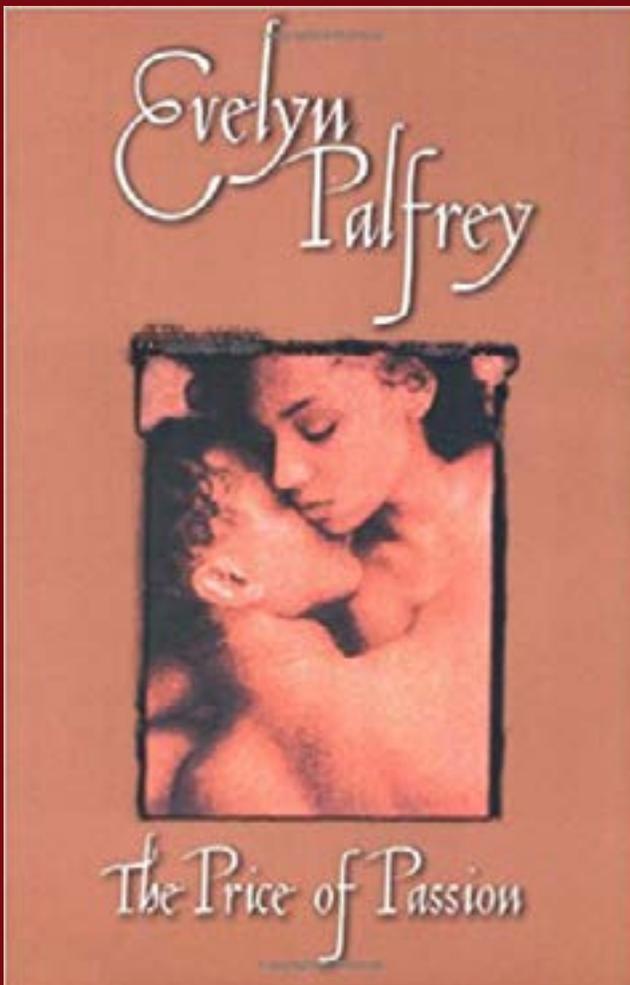
Evelyn Palfrey: I was shocked to learn that this was not a rare situation. Many women told me about something like this happening in their family.

NK: I'm cracking up at the answer. I was just about to ask the question about why you changed it. You answered it.

Evelyn Palfrey: I even got a letter from a young woman who said that she had been that baby. In a small town. Daddy doctor. The whole town knew he had two families. I bawled like a baby feeling all the pain that girl relayed in the latter. Just wish I had got the letter before the book! Could have made it juicier :) Back to the courtroom drama. You can't wait 'til in the morning to kill 'em, if you're gonna plead temp insanity.

NK: It's been done to death, and played out in the media. Why do you think that infidelity is STILL such a painful thing for women in this day and age?

Evelyn Palfrey: We as women are wired to nest. Make a home, etc. Men are wired to hunt. They pretend they want to nest, but many don't. So we are misled, many times. Then comes the heart-ripping part.



Ka’Lu Carter Underwood: Because no matter how many times it happens, each instance feels like your heart is being ripped out

Edwina Putney: Because the U.S. isn’t as liberal or open-minded towards accepting infidelity as France or Italy. Many women do, but too many women feel they’ve failed if their husband cheats.

Evelyn Palfrey: Do any of you know of such a situation? Not just an outside child. That’s pretty common. But where the hubby expects the wife to raise the child.

Ka’Lu Carter Underwood: Yes. I have a friend who had a long-term, live-in boyfriend that she allowed to bring in an outside child twice. No, they weren’t married, but after 20 years, they may have been considered common law.

Beverly Alexander-Tillison: Yes, a friend’s daughter married a man and found out the day of the wedding (after the I do’s of course) he had a newborn by someone else and he wanted to bring this one into their new marriage.

Ka’Lu Carter Underwood: Are you working on anything now?

Evelyn Palfrey: I always have three or four stories cooking. The one I’ve been working on the longest is a sequel to Price of Passion. Cora and Lewis’s story.

Edwina Putney: When Walter considered raping Vivian because she wouldn’t yield to his seduction, he realized he’d sponsored marital rape legislation, but figured it wouldn’t really be

rape. Why did you include that (as if he wasn’t a big enough cad)?

Evelyn Palfrey: In every book, I try to address a legal issue, for readers to chew on, or learn from. At that time, there was a bill in the Legislature about marital rape. MANY, MANY men do not believe a man can rape his wife. Evelyn Palfrey, It is a sticky wicket. Because there is rarely a witness to rape, it’s usually just he said/she said.

Edwina Putney: And in a marital situation, there would definitely be no witnesses unless there are older children.

Evelyn Palfrey: He’s having an affair. I let him have sex with me, then call the po-po and claim rape as retribution. On the other hand, we’re breaking up. He comes home half drunk, insists that I have sex with him. I say ‘you gotta be kidding.’ Then he forces me.

NK: When so many authors were writing for the 20-30 crowd, what made you decide to write for the “marvelously mature”?

Evelyn Palfrey: The traditional romance novel has a 18-25 year old heroine; hero can be up to 10 years older. I read a lot of those when I was younger. But as I aged, and had children older than those, I found myself uninterested in those plots and conflicts.

Edwina Putney: And I am so happy that you made that decision! You know I <3 u lady!

Lareeta Payne Robinson: The reason I love your books. Not wanting to read about twenty year olds; when I am past that and so is my child.

Love the marvelously mature.

Evelyn Palfrey: plots. Boy meets girl, boy gets girl, they live happily ever after. But when you're 40, your life is more full than that. You have career, in-laws, ex-spouses, current spouses, half grown kids. Did I leave out graduations, proms, grandchildren, weddings? :)

NK: YES!!!!!!

Evelyn Palfrey: So that was more interesting to me. I kept waiting for a 'real' writer, like Donna, or Francis or Rochelle to write a romance novel that had issues and conflicts that I was interested in. So I started writing a little story to pass the time until then. That became Three Perfect Men.

Edwina Putney: Three Perfect Men is an amazing book! I love it.

Evelyn Palfrey: That one will always be my favorite. I just LOVE me some Ike.

Lareeta Payne Robinson: First time I read Three Perfect Men was through a library loan from Colorado. Then I was able to get a copy from you and get it signed.

Edwina Putney: When Vivian considered aborting her and Marc's baby, it was understandable. Why did you decide to let Marc's reasoning prevail?

Evelyn Palfrey: As I said, I just let that chick do her, and I reported it to the readers. In addition, Abortion is such a sticky topic. I just wanted to raise the issue. Another woman would have handled it differently. But that would have taken the story in a different trajectory. I think, since

Marc wanted the baby and willing to take care of it, he would have resented her for years.

Evelyn Palfrey: So The Price of Passion is the 2nd book in the series--which has no name. Dangerous Dilemmas is the third and has quite the suspense and action-filled romance.

NK: Marital rape is such a hot topic. How was it treated then in the legal community when you first wrote the book versus now?

Evelyn Palfrey: Well, the bill passed the Legislature years ago. And everybody has calmed down. I probably wouldn't bring it up now twenty years later. We have a LOT more pressing issues.

NK: What issue would be something that would interest you to write at this time?

Evelyn Palfrey: Good question. I would LOVE to write a sci-fi story, but . . .

NK: you've mastered contemporary fiction, and there are several CF authors who have gotten their feet wet in Sci-Fi, what's keeping you from diving in?

Evelyn Palfrey: Not smart enough :)

Edwina Putney **rolling my eyes**

NK: ***rolling my eyes too****

Evelyn Palfrey: I spent the last twenty years in criminal law, so would probably be along those lines. Cops killing our sons is current, but it's been done masterfully by a couple of seasoned writers. Plus, since I have a son and a grandson,

it would be too painful for me to live with for the 3-6 months it would take.

NK: I could totally understand that.

Antoinette Gates: How did the road trip in the RV scene come about? And how did the trek across the Gulf Coast play into it, especially Biloxi?

Evelyn Palfrey: That was actually a trip I took annually for about fifteen years to the Blues Festival. Wanted to share with readers. It fit. If you ever get a chance to see the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, Mississippi, do it.

NK: You said you were working on a sequel to *The Price of Passion*, when can we expect to lay eyes on that one?

Evelyn Palfrey: The trilogy is about three girls who were roommates in University of Texas, when it was just integrating. So they were all put together in the dorm room. The three stories of what happens to each of them twenty-five years later. They became estranged over an incident back then. But there is a reunion.

NK: That's going to be good. :)

Edwina Putney: Any plans to format the books for e-book releases?

Evelyn Palfrey: *Price of Passion* and *Dangerous Dilemmas* are available as ebooks from Simon and Schuster. *Three Perfect Men* is not in ebook yet. *Going Home* is in ebook.

NK: Please let the readers know how they can keep up with you and learn of any new work

when it releases.

Evelyn Palfrey: I have a FB page--Author Evelyn Palfrey. And a website that's not very active right now. I also have a EP Yahoo group. We do books, but we do a LOT of issues that intelligent women talk about. And thanks SO much for inviting me to participate with these ladies!

NK: Thank you for joining us here in the Literary Cafe tonight.

Evelyn Palfrey: Night, Night, Ladies. Gotta go cook some greens, and brussels sprouts--while watching for the tornado!

NK: GREENS!!!! (You can keep those Brussels sprouts).

Evelyn Palfrey: I have harvested collards, mustards, Swiss chard this week. Washed and in the fridge. Maybe I'll wait until tomorrow to cook. Fingers are tired after this chat =:)

NK: Indeed. Harvested?

Evelyn Palfrey: Big time garden. I love to play in the dirt. Country girl.

NK: Wow. Little known fact. :)

Evelyn Palfrey: Also harvested some asparagus today. But ate it while standing in the garden. Asparagus never makes it into the house :)

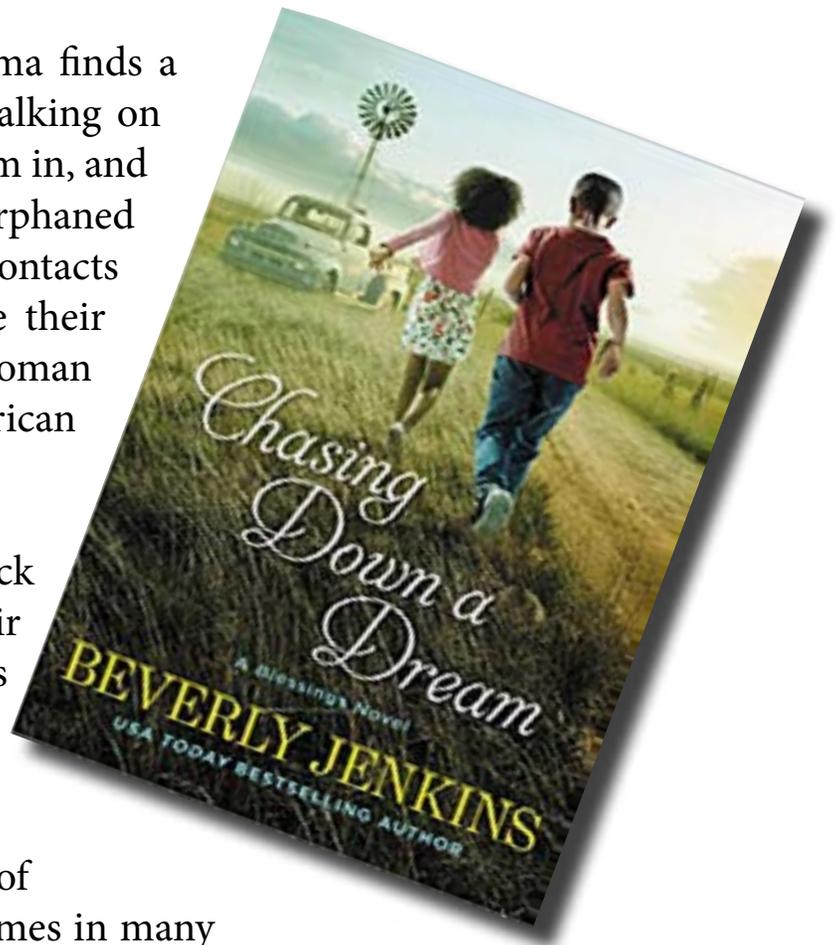
A Blessing Novel by BEVERLY JENKINS

NAACP nominee and USA Today bestselling author Beverly Jenkins continues her beloved Blessings series with a heartwarming novel about what really makes a family. There's never a dull day in Henry Adams, Kansas.

Tamar July has never had a great relationship with certain members of her family. In fact, she'd characterize it as a "hate/hate relationship." But when her cousin calls her with the news that she's dying and wants Tamar to plan the funeral, she's shocked but is willing to drop everything for her.

After a horrendous storm, Gemma finds a young boy and his little sister walking on the side of the road. She takes them in, and quickly falls in love with the orphaned siblings. But when Gemma contacts Social Services to try to become their foster mother, she's told a white woman cannot foster African-American children.

In the midst of these trials, Jack and Rocky are trying to plan their wedding. The entire town comes together to lend a helping hand. Though the residents of Henry Adams face seemingly insurmountable obstacles, each of them will discover that family comes in many forms, especially during the most trying of times.



Honoring My Man on Father's Day and Everyday

by: Angelia Vernon Menchan

I'M OFTEN ASKED WHAT MAKES MY MAN SPECIAL. Often, I say, very tongue-in-cheek, he chose me. The truth is, the first thing is that he has always owned me and his feelings for me publicly. There has never been any "manly posturing" for his friends, acting as if he were too cool to say that's my woman, my wife. He defends me against anyone, including his parents. It is clear to all who know us; I am first after God.



More than that though, he loves God, he's honorable, and he raised our sons, as hands-on as he could be while also being a professional soldier. In fact, because of that experience, he was more involved with the growth of our youngest son. He was thirteen when my husband retired, and on our drive to Florida from Oklahoma, he told me he was taking over with our son. I took some umbrage to that because I was a great mom and our eldest was in the military and at nineteen, he was also a good kid. I had mostly been the reason for that. He didn't argue the issue, though I tried. He had said it, meant it, and planned to represent it.

Once we were settled in, he was true to his word, and they started doing things together exclusive of me. I wasn't thrilled initially but slowly saw the brilliance and results. I suddenly had more time

to do things I never had before, and I saw my baby growing into a man. He modeled his father in many ways and was courteous, gallant, and respectful while at the same time, maintaining a masculine edginess. I also noted the change in how he treated me. He was more decisional, didn't ask me to do things as much, and I grew to be appreciative.

Once that same son was employed and dating, I heard from young ladies and employers mentioning how highly they thought of him. While I knew I was "in him," much of who he became was based on how he watched his father treat me and insisted our sons did likewise.

I recall a conversation that still makes me smile.

Mister dragged our boys into the room one day where I was resting and demanded; "Do you see that woman right there? That's my wife."

The boys looked confused, but Mr. expounded, by saying, "She's my wife, first. She was my wife before both of you were born, and you will never disrespect her. Ever. If you do, you will answer to me. My wife. Do you understand?"

My eldest rolled his eyes, and his dad moved in on him and repeated, "Yes, boy, my wife and you won't disrespect her, not by talking back,

bringing foolishness to her or not doing your best. You understand?"

That had them both shook because I was the yeller in the parental unit. They said, "Yes sir."

Later, I asked, "What was that about?" He didn't tell me. He said, "It was handled." I was tempted to ask the boys but didn't. I was glad I hadn't because retrospectively, I realized that would have somehow undermined my husband's authority.

In this season of life, I often hear women say they aren't submitting to any man and unless I'm asked specifically I say nothing. First, because I'm not interested in arguing the issue. However, when I'm asked, I make it clear submitting doesn't mean being treated badly, cheated on, or not being honored or respected as worthy. I also say "When you get a man who is worthy of being the head of his household, who loves you only after God and will fight anyone who crosses you, submission is easy in the home, life, and bedroom." Yes, I went there.

In my home, I felt safe and cared for even in the times when I've earned considerably more money and had a bigger career title, my man was still head of our household. Who he was, how he cared for me and us and carried himself

commanded that. Remember I said, a man must be WORTHY.

Worthy men also respect and support their woman's ambitions and dreams. When I started publishing books, I had no idea how I would maneuver all of this. My man moved in and showed his support, taking me where I needed to be to grow this business and many times was my personal photographer. He also became my cover designer. More than anything, the strong, silent partner allowed me "to be" and was there when I stumbled on the journey or wanted to give up. That is worth more than its weight in platinum I assure.

This man God gave me is far from perfect. He can be moody and closed off at times, but he never leaves me feeling excluded or unloved. I know he has me at all times, and in my Grace Jones voice, I sing . . . Maurice Menchan isn't perfect, but he's perfect for me.

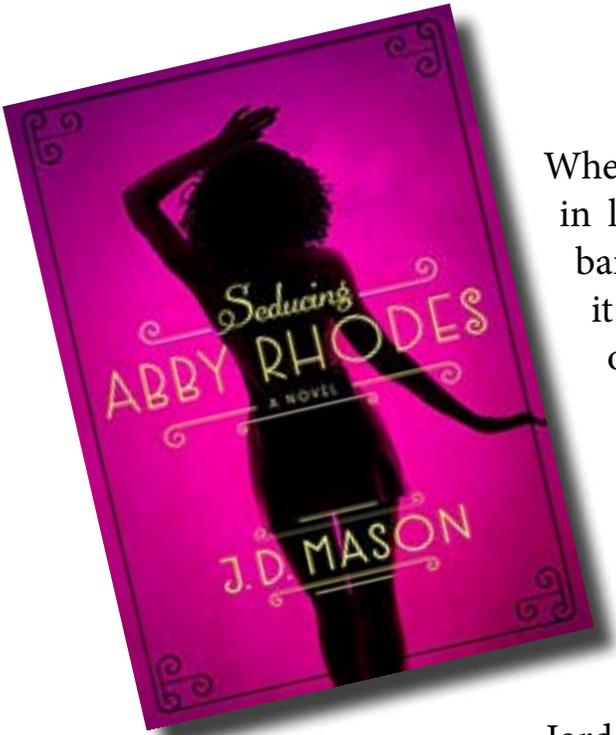
Happy Father's day lover, homie, friend . . .



Angelia Vernon Menchan is wife, mother, nana, author, publisher, budget analyst and mentor who helms Honorable MENCHAN Media. Menchan has more than a hundred print and e-books collectively and speaks to young women around the country about being true to their own life course. Menchan has also published fifteen other author and plans in 2018 to expand the publishing arm of her ventures.

*Find out more about Angelia Vernon Menchan at:
<http://angeliavernonmenchanserial.blogspot.com>*

Coming in July



When Abigail Rhodes bought that old house she fell in love with in Blink, Texas, she got more than she bargained for. After being told by the local psychic that it is filled with a passionate energy from the previous owners, who died years ago, Abby decides to fix up her beloved house and reluctantly moves in. But ever since then, strange things have been happening in her newly renovated home, and Abby has been plagued with dreams that wake her up and leave her breathless.

After a tumultuous life these last few years, Jordan Gatewood is following what amounts to a trail of breadcrumbs in an effort to find a renewed sense of purpose.

Searching for the truth about the man his adoptive-father really was, Jordan makes his way to the old house where his father was murdered, in Blink—and right to the petite, understated beauty that answers the door. It's not long before Jordan realizes, quite unexpectedly, that Abby is the perfect woman for him. Jordan doesn't believe in ghosts or fate, but he does know that the powerful connection he feels for this woman started the day he met her in that house and he is determined to make her his.

Robin is a successful Corporate Attorney, and was proud to be the lover of the most sought after bachelor in the state of Texas--until he abruptly breaks off their relationship, leaving her confused, heartbroken and bitter. When she discovers that he's left her for another woman, a woman she considers beneath her, Robin is determined to teach him a brutal lesson.

A man like Jordan has too many secrets, secrets that, if found out, could not only destroy his relationship with this other woman, but that could also cost him the biggest business deal of his life, and possibly, his freedom. Robin is the last person he wants to go up against, and she will stop at nothing to get him back or to make him pay for his betrayal, even if that means unleashing those secrets. The question is, will Jordan let her? Or will his all-consuming obsession with Abby win out, in *Seducing Abby Rhodes* by J.D. Mason.

DON'T TAKE IT PERSONAL.

by: Naleighna Kai

Everyone who knows my background understands that I didn't have a father worth writing about, or any man in my life growing up that made an impact. What does that mean? It means I went looking for love in all the wrong places.

Not having a father meant that I fell for men who told me that they loved me, and not the ones who actually did. Enter a 25-year old man when I was seventeen and didn't understand anything about intimate relationships. I gave birth to my first child two weeks after my nineteenth birthday. And here's where the tango of abandonment, rejection, and betrayal danced its way from me to my only son.

So, I'm the person who feeds my son, put clothes on his back and a roof over his head, and makes sure he has the best education. But guess who my son has an unwavering need to connect with? The absentee father. The one who had to be dragged into court to do the right thing. The one who spent years as a professional student trying



*The Late Great Shihan Paul "Deno" Thomas
My son's Martial Arts Instructor*



*Chris McKee, my son's "Big Brother"
From Big Brothers/Big Sisters of
Metropolitan Chicago*

to avoid jobs that would allow the court to take out child support. The one who tried to terminate his parental rights thinking it would help him avoid paying child support. Thankfully, the judge saw through that ploy, was going to grant it but told him he was still on the hook for child support all the way into my son's college years. Well, that ended that motion.

As a young mother, I took my son's need personal for a while. And only later in life did I admit it I was hurt because my son's longing for a man who didn't want him. Basically, his actions made me wonder: Ain't I enough?

When I did some thinking about things, I had to come to terms with the fact that some women who spend their entire lives searching for that missing part of them. They'll find it in Mr. Wrong, Mr. Right Now, Mr. Deadbeat, Mr. Sometimes, Mr. Down Low, Mr. Judgmental, Mr. Heavy-handed or some other derivation of man who doesn't quite pan out. Only a small percentage of women land with men who are true to their vows; men who believe in that whole "til death do us part" thing that society has made so many buy into as the ideal.

I love witnessing the love between couples who have that kind of love. Brenda Jackson and her beloved Gerald Jackson; Deno Thomas (my son's Karate instructor) and his wife Liz Thomas, Will and Jada Smith, Janine and Brenton Ingram. This is only a few examples because this article

isn't about the couples, it is about the fact they represent the ideal balance between feminine and masculine energy in a relationship. This is what some long for, and that also includes the children that long for that balance as well. Especially ones who have an overwhelming abundance of feminine energy around them—being raised by mothers, aunts, grandmothers—with very little male input or role models. I didn't understand how much that lack of a masculine presence left a hole in my son's soul. Thoughts that ran from:

I excel in my studies, what's wrong with me that my father wants nothing to do with me?

I'm a Karate champion, what's wrong with me that my father wants nothing to do with me?

I'm a football champion, what's wrong with me that my father wants nothing to do with me?

I'm a baseball champion, what's wrong with me that my father wants nothing to do with me?

I'm a good kid, what's wrong with me that my father wants nothing to do with me?

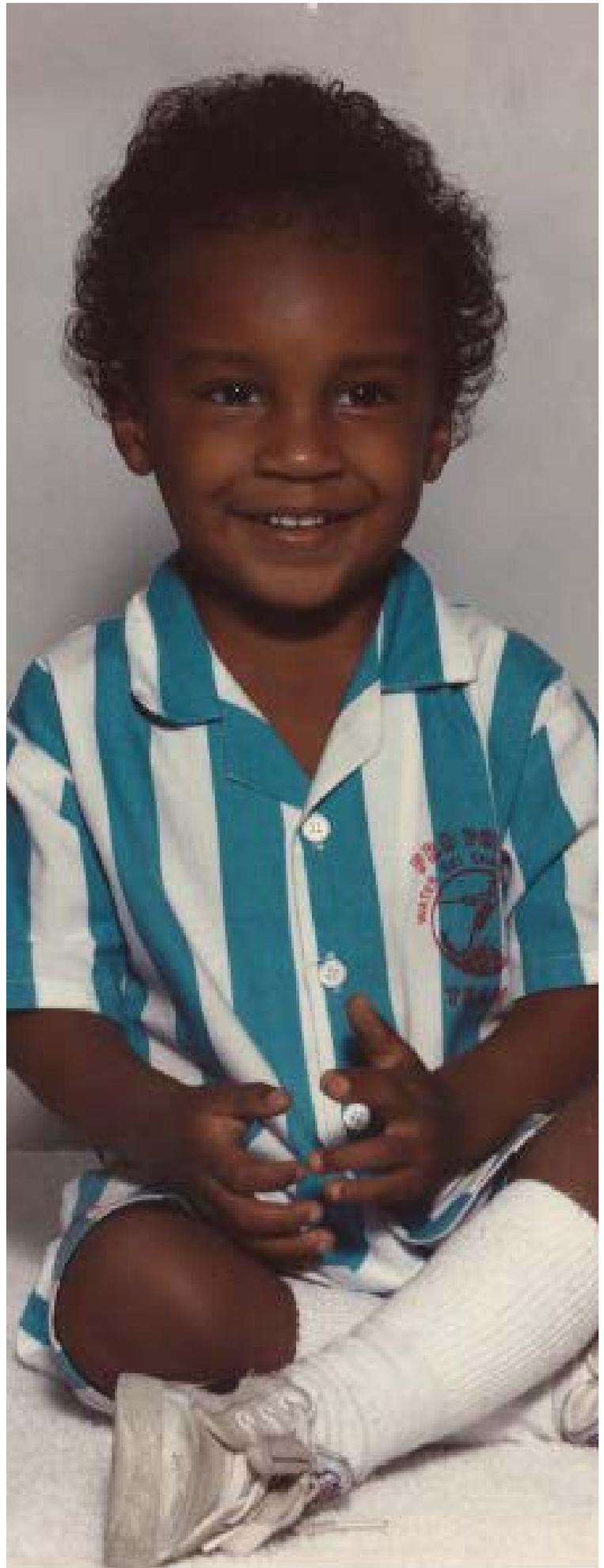
He, like I, did not understand that his father's lack of involvement was something my son had taken as meaning maybe there was personally wrong with him. This thought began to affect his schooling and other aspects of his behavior. Maybe it was puberty kicking (which is another story that I told in the Mother's Day issue), but overall I had to take my son's need for a male role

model seriously. I had never kept him from his father or that side of the family. I never wanted him to be able to say that I was the reason that his father wasn't in his life. So whenever he wanted to visit, I dropped everything and took him there. Whenever his father finally deemed his son worthy of a visit (which was very rare), even if my son happened to be on punishment (also very rare), he would immediately be off for that period. Why? Because those weren't do-over moments in life and I weighed the importance of trying to make a point versus having my son remember that I denied him a visit with his father. That was not going to fall on me.

Now, here's why I wrote this article. Not to bash the man who was barely there, but to bring home the point to mothers not to interfere with their child's need for that presence in their lives. Unless their father is a danger to a child, there aren't too many other reasons to deny your child this wish. Your personal issues with the father, about money, not paying child support, etc. doesn't matter to your child. What matters is presence. Yours and his.

Don't take it personally that you're doing all the heavy-lifting, and the other part of the equation just sweeps in and out at will and holds the same weight and power that you do. Is it fair? Probably not, but your child isn't thinking about fair, they're thinking of filling that hole in their heart and soul.

As a woman, you've done that, right?





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*"You Believed &
You Achieved!
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Believing!"
Congratulations*



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Number One Son, I am eternally proud of all you have accomplished. Career goals and financial goals are important, but keep your spiritual goals, relationships, and personal achievements in mind. I desire that you have all the success you deserve and much more.

*I Love you,
Number One Mom*

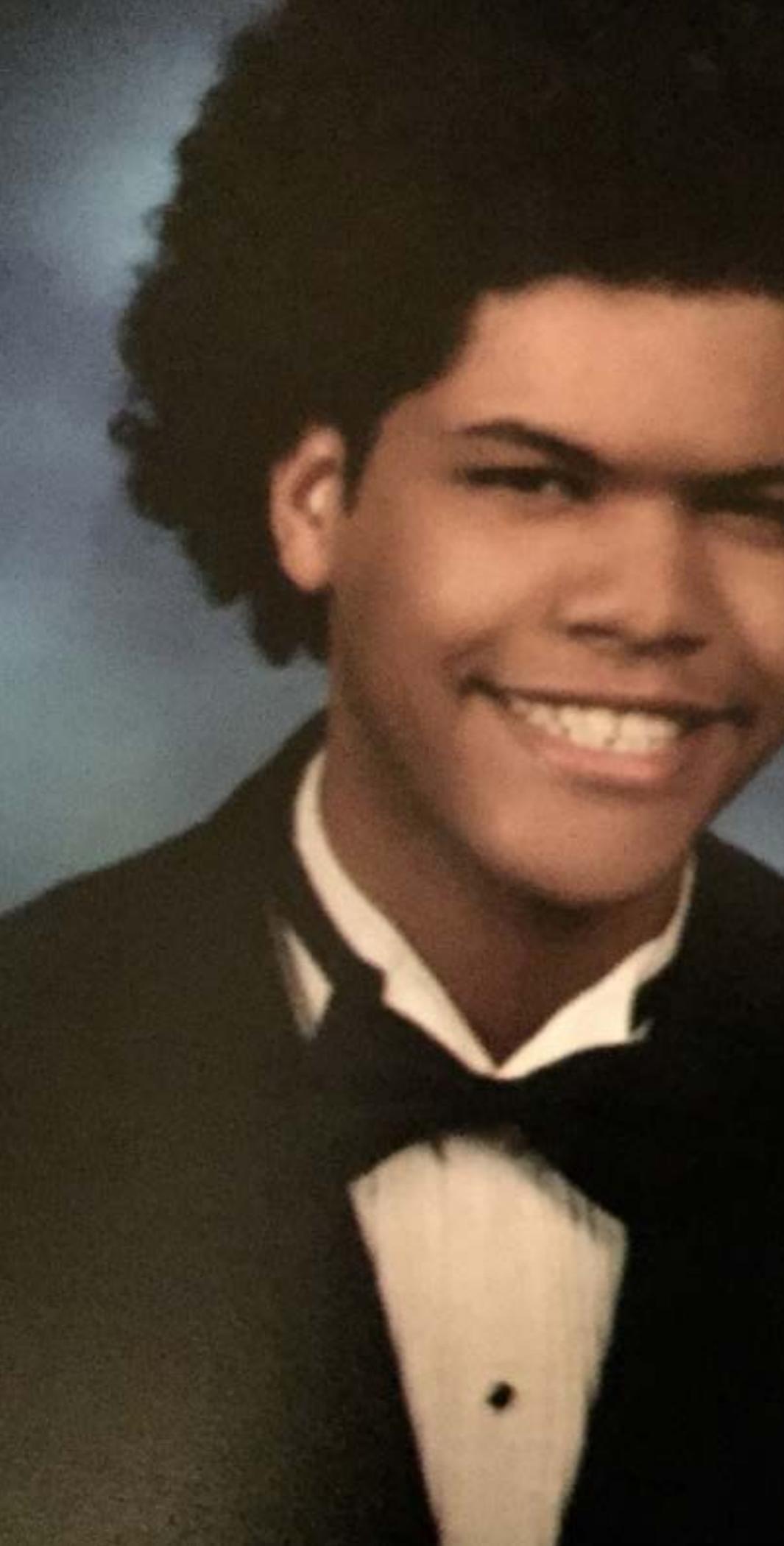


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*"I am so very proud
of you. Keep doing
great things."*

*-LaCeasha Banks
Turner*



NIKAI STEPHON MORALES

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School (Wilmington, DE)
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Digital Media

*To my wonderfully,
talented grandson,
May your future be
as bright as your
smile.*

*Love & Blessings,
Mom Mom*



JASMINE LANEE' BALLARD

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University

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Humanities

*Congratulations
and may God
continue to bless
you in all of your
future endeavors,
Jasmine! Auntie
loves you!*



CAMERON WADE

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*To say I am proud
of you is an
understatement
because I am
overjoyed.*

*Congratulations on
your accomplishments
and I can't wait to see
what you do next!*

*— Anita Roseboro-
Wade*



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*What a wonderful time
it has been watching
this amazing young
woman grow, She is
smart beautiful and
a heart of GOLD...
Simmons has been
seven Colleges and
University, offered over
120, 000. in scholarships
to choose from. So
proud of you baby*



ANDRE GILMER JR.

Leo High School
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High School Diploma

*Congratulations on a
job well done. May you
only experience God's
grace, love, and success
throughout your life.*

*Love your grandmother,
Sesvalah*

CAVALCADE 2017



The 13th Annual Cavalcade of Authors Chicago Tour Friday, October 13 to Sunday, October 15, 2017, is the ultimate literary event where readers and book clubs actually tour several areas, restaurants, and special attractions of Chicago with their favorite authors.

The event gives up close and personal time with favorite authors and the opportunity to meet new ones, partner up with them in a game of Spades or Bid Whist, learn some Chicago Style Stepping and line dances, watch performances that are sure to make you laugh, and enjoy late night intimate chats where the authors slip into their pajamas, let their hair down and discuss personal experiences they might not share anywhere else.

New York Times bestselling authors Brenda Jackson and Mary Monroe are joined by national bestselling authors Naleighna Kai, J. L. Woodson, Pat Simmons, along with Cerece Rennie Murphy, Bridgett Renay, Jo McEntee, Meredith Greenwood, Jessica Cage, MarZe' Scott and many others.

See the full line-up and itinerary at:

WWW.THECAVALCADEOFAUTHORS.COM

2017 Literary Events

June 2-4, 2017

Go On Girl! Book Club Annual Awards Loews
Chicago O'Hare Hotel,
Chicago, Illinois

October 5-7, 2017

A Reading Warriors Retreat
Building Relationships Around Books
Arlington, DC 22202

June 17

Great Midwest Book Fest
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

October 13-14, 2017

Black Authors & Readers Rock Weekend
The Comfort Inn of Bowie, Bowie, Maryland

Wednesday, May 31, 2017

Black Pack Party (during BEA)
6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
New York, New York

October 13-15, 2017

The Cavalcade of Authors
featuring
New York Times Bestselling Authors:
Brenda Jackson
Mary Monroe
Chicago, Illinois
www.thecavalcadeofauthors.com

July 15, 2017

Harlem Book Fair
West 135th Street, Harlem, New York
Time: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

October 26-29, 2017

Christian Book Lover's Retreat
Charlotte, North Carolina

July 27, 2017

EDC Creations - Chocolate Social
Atlanta, Georgia

July 28-30, 2017

National Book Club Conference
Atlanta, Georgia
Loews Atlanta Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia

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