

I was a young Black girl who learned how to survive before I learned how to love myself.

I was raised by a strong Black woman, but I still grew up with a silent question echoing in my spirit: Why wasn't my father there? And when you grow up with that kind of absence, you don't just miss a man—you miss identity, protection, affirmation. You miss a mirror.

I carried a story that my father rejected me the day I was born because of my light skin. Whether it was truth, pain, or misunderstanding didn't matter—because I believed it and belief shapes behavior.

I met him once, at 13, in Minneapolis. One summer, one moment, and only one memory. Then... silence again for nearly two decades. That kind of inconsistency will have you out here confusing attention for love and presence for permanence.

On the outside, I was confident, plus-sized, church-going, and covered. On the inside, I was searching for validation, searching for love, and searching for a man to fill a space that was never his assignment.

I became the kind of young Black girl who made herself available, thinking access would turn into attachment. Thinking being chosen meant

being loved. But I wasn't being loved—I was being used. And I accepted it because I didn't fully love myself.

Nobody saw it. They didn't see the sneaking, the promiscuity, the toxic relationships, or the violence. Because I knew how to perform. I knew how to hide. I knew how to be "the good church girl" while quietly breaking in private.

And in our community, therapy wasn't even an option. We were taught, "Black folks don't go to shrinks."

Healing was replaced with silence. Struggle was normalized. And pain was something you prayed about—but never talked through.

But God...

God has a way of interrupting your performance with purpose.

I got pregnant during a season when I was trying to live right, but still moving wrong. I wasn't ready. I didn't want to be a single mother. I didn't want my life to look like what I had seen. But that pregnancy? That wasn't just a consequence.

That was my defining moment.

That was the moment the mask broke. It was the moment the hiding ended, the moment God said, "No more pretending. It's time to become."

My daughter didn't just make me a mother—she made me accountable.

She made me face myself and grow up. That's when the real transition happened. When I told the truth about myself.

That's when the Black girl in me—who was sneaking,

seeking, and silently suffering— became a Black woman who stands in truth, healing, and responsibility.

I wrote *Lost in the Woods* because I refused to let another young Black girl think she had to hide her way into womanhood. There is nothing powerful about pretending. There is nothing holy about silence. Real transformation comes from exposure, accountability, and grace.

I am not perfect. I still fall short. I still have work to do. But I am no longer ashamed. Because the difference between who I was and who I am now is this: The Black girl hid her flaws. But the Black woman owns them—and heals anyway.

Today, I believe in therapy. I advocate for it. I live by it. Because healing requires more than prayer—it requires participation.

You have to do the work, unpack the pain, and confront the patterns. Sometimes, you have to sit across from someone and say, "Help me understand why I am the way I am." That's not a weakness. That's freedom.

So to every Black girl trying to become, you don't have to hide, you don't have to perform, you don't have to carry shame like it's your identity.

Be honest. Be transparent. Be willing to do the work. Because somebody is watching you, needing your courage to unlock their own.

Flaws and all — this is what it looks like when a Black girl becomes a Black woman.

*I am Trameka Woods TS#14 of 52 of The SoulTown Magazine. I want to thank you all for having SOUL! ☺*

# *From Daddy's Absence to Divine Alignment: When a Black Girl Became a Black Woman*

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