

## In Her Own Words Collaboration\_Sample Writing

It dawned on me recently that had one person said to me, “Girl, I’ve got you... If you need a place to stay; if you need to hold some cash; if you need me, I’ve got you,” I would have left seven years ago. *Seven years...* Let that marinate.

Seven years is how long it’s taken me to pay off bills, rebuild my credit, conceptualize a plan and hear one of my closest friends say, “Girl, I know you. You’re a planner. You will not do anything without a plan, and I know you are not going to move yourself or those kids without a way to maintain. We are buying a house next year and, if your plan hasn’t come full circle before we do, you and those babies can come here.” *Sigh...* That’s exactly what I’d needed to hear...seven years ago.

Ending the call, I took several deep breaths. *Breathe in... Breath out...* It soothed me, relaxed me...gave me something to hold on to. I took comfort in knowing someone knows the real me. Someone hadn’t prejudged or condemned me according to their own standards because they recognize I have my own and that—bad or good, questionable or not—they’re still mine. Someone gets me...now. *Wait a minute*, clearing my throat and popping the imaginary bubble dangling over my head... *Screeeeech! Braaaake! Haaaalt! Let’s back this wagon up and start at the beginning... Seven years ago... At the beginning of the storm.*

Have you ever felt like something wasn’t right, and no matter how you tried to convince yourself things would be okay, even you didn’t believe yourself? Well, that’s where I was. Something wasn’t right, and no matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t shake the feeling that something was coming I couldn’t avoid. I worried; I prayed; and then, I finally got up the nerve to ask God to give me the strength to endure whatever this next season would bring...to show me what I was missing. Less than 24 hours later, He delivered. An e-mail from a stranger, a Facebook message from a second one... It was like chasing rabbits in a never-ending forest. I’m not going to lie to you; I lost it. And I did some things I will probably never write about either, as I’m sure many of you have had that moment when you knew, or you set your mind to finding out, then when you did...*boom!*

As we know, the confrontation is never fun. Well, let me back up again. Depending on which side of the playing field you’re standing on, it very well might be a little entertaining. You ask, “How can I say that? Because, for me, it was very empowering to pick up the telephone and say, “May you someday achieve for yourself the life you so desperately hoped to acquire from me.” Seriously, think about it. Suddenly, the hunter becomes the hunted. And, in this very instance, you can either have or lose everything.

I thought the storm was after my marriage. The howling winds and the pouring rains that followed—the loud sounds of thunder and earthshattering clashes of lightening that ensued—I thought it all represented a struggle we were going through for God to do or give us something, perhaps even take us somewhere. I believed that if I just held on a little longer and fought a little harder... If I just kept the faith and didn’t give up, the sun would shine again. And I fought... I fought my man; I fought my marriage; I fought my Maker, and I fought myself. With each resistance, I bent—the harder the winds blew, the heavier the rains fell, until I collapsed.

In seasons of barrenness, we often believe we’re not good enough to be, do or have anything. When my marriage didn’t materialize how I had envisioned, I finally realized I was the tree the middle of the storm, and it was not there to kill me; it wasn’t there to break me; it was to test me and to show me I was built to withstand. The blows that had come against me were intended to strengthen me, not destroy me. I may have passed out, but *I didn’t die.*