Title: A Misconstrued Soul: The Darkness That Lies Within

Genre : Non-Fiction

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1 The Birth of a Miracle

* Born into the world
* Upbringing
* Fatherless child
* Elementary School
* Breaking barriers in sports
* Adversity, first fight
* Conquered being top student

Chapter 2-Creating New Opportunities

* Middle school
* Bullied
* Insight into multi sports, band, how I started Track and Field
* First real relationship at 13 with a 17-year-old
* Body shamed/ self-image/ lack of confidence in my own looks
* Not acknowledging my accomplishments because of wanting to achieve bigger

Chapter 3 Jumping into Diversity

* Accepting being bullied and transitions into being gay
* Transferred into a mixed school, first encounters with racism, lack of culture, surgery
* Transitioned back to hometown school
* Journey into a new life with relationships and trying to find myself
* The excitement of high school, family oriented and friends
* How my mother cursed my progression in Track and field
* Last fight
* Popularity and big-time athlete
* A wish to God in connection to my mother’s health issues
* Picking the Perfect college
* Offer to Australia
* Prom, ribbon pinning, graduation

Chapter 4 Pushing their agenda

* The lack in my own decisions
* A track story like no other
* International athlete
* Going away party
* Summer encounter with my coach
* My uncles battle with alcoholism and his wife

Chapter 5 Entering into college

* Breakup with girlfriend due to distance
* Trying to get back to living a straight lifestyle
* Crashing into a Nigerian lover and God
* Interaction with campus and teammates
* Pushing my brain to get work done quickly to rest with low stress
* My coaches vision
* The transition in body build for what I was getting ready to accomplish

Chapter 6 What is Happening?

* First win in competition
* Alcohol poisoning
* First encounter with God
* Hands swelling
* Counseling a disability services
* First set of diagnosis with mimics of other ailments

Chapter 7 Hopeful Insights

* Trying to stay positive
* Focusing on school
* Continuing to do well in meets
* Continuing to counsel and disability services because symptoms were worsening

Chapter 8 The Devil is Working

* Legendary Black Book
* No one is safe from my homicidal ideation
* No one took counseling and disability services seriously
* Death seems enjoyable and the beast has awoken
* Teachers lack help because they felt like they would be showing favoritism though I was sick
* Trying to stay in school
* First job
* Passed physical but didn’t really pass it
* Decides my issues are far too great must seek help from doctors at home
* Doctors at home/ Experimental practices Second encounter with God
* The start of death in the family
* Relationships and how one guy tried to get the beast to appear
* Uncle’s interaction and death
* Trying for a kid in case my health wouldn’t allow it in the future
* First love doesn’t deserve to have no parts in my life

Chapter 9 Mental Marriage

* Reconnecting with an old friend
* Jumping back into a comfort zone of being gay
* Indulging into a toxic relationship with both of us battling outstanding mental health issues
* My sisters message
* Trying to make everything come together
* Accepting a lazy marriage proposal
* Dealing with her friends
* Living under my mother’s roof with all three of us having outstanding mental health issues
* Death of another loved one
* Mother giving the family crap on the situation so now the family is divided
* Toxic mother daughter relationship because of fiancé
* A father’s support and no family support
* Moving into my great grandparent’s old home to attempt to live with my wife without my mother’s input but she constantly called and argued
* Trying to keep my wife in the present but almost killing myself in sexual activities that increased my heart rate

Chapter 10 Separation

* Therapists and Med doctors
* Death of my great grandpa
* Mental Health Hospital
* Decides to separate with wife because I could no longer keep it together and we found out that she had disassociation where she travels to her past self usually about 3-4 years back, she also had severe PTSD and lost her job because of a big issue which involved the law

Chapter 11 A Mothers Will

* Trying to get away and get back to school
* No luck with my first college so went with a lessor division for sports
* Made a deal with my wife to keep things under wraps and try to make it work while we were on campus
* Argument with mother in the cardiologist office after they explained that it was in my best interest not to get hyped
* Attack on me when my mother found out I was still with my wife, so she took my car which was still in her name while I was on campus experiencing heart and kidney issues nobody was on her side so my aunt and granny made a way for me to have transportation.
* A grandmother special day turned into a broken gift to my mother
* A grown man’s childish agenda
* Bringing in a new year exited out of the family

 Chapter 12 The Idea of Poly

* More into the series of death
* School at McKendree
* Though we weren’t stable a not even together long as far as a marriage my wife yells that she wanted poly despite my feelings
* Did it anyway so it could blow back in her face
* Enjoyed our new partner because it gave me a chance to explore someone without those issues and it was a load off me
* Wife clocked out and never returned
* Downhill from there
* 6 months on a cane
* Last straw walked away for a final notice of divorce
* Death of my great grandmother
* Ended it and planned to head to NM

Chapter 13 A New Beginning

* Acting off impulses
* Mothers control to not let me go to school in NM because of my health
* Told me the car was not an option
* Relied on my absent father and he came through
* The journey to New Mexico with more difficult health issues (BP) Stage 4
* Track and field, bad coaches
* Crash course in fear of having to go to another school
* Took 48 credit hours (16 classes in one semester to jump from an incoming sophomore to a senior, excessive bleeding

Chapter 14 A Long Time Coming

* Left NM after that semester to continue online
* Brain evolves because of overexertion and how I now function
* Working
* Trying to make it work with the partner from the poly relationship because of it ending weird
* Decided to get a home together
* Officially done Summa Cum Laude BBA Healthcare Management
* Cliff hanger

A Misconstrued Soul: The Darkness That Lies Within

The fear I fought in seasons taught the very song I sing. My God brought the very thought of what do I truly bring? I listened through and then I grew but faulted in certain things. I wished upon my very life the issues that I have redeemed. Even then my life in Christ was like salmon swimming upstream. I sped up time to outshine my first step into humanity. From then on out my life has been described as clouds, blurry yet fascinating. In my life I reversed time, and in the womb, we start to see. A redo has often been on my mind but of course there’s no button to jump. However, the story starts like an ordinary start before it starts to sump. Welcome to the start of my journey.

There lies in my mother a small underweight baby. A little over 5 pounds and the doctors knew when I arrived, I was going to need medical attention. A month early, I was surely underdeveloped. Now here comes the push. As I entered this world, I had a cry like no other. I proved that I was strong, and I surely had a voice. That same voice that then grew silent. On a good Friday in 1997 I entered the world to a loving family. Shortly after, my mother and I moved in with my great grandparents because we needed additional space. Every day that I grew with my family brought me closer to understanding that there is power in a supporting village. As far back as I can remember, my family loved and supported me through whatever I set my mind to. Back then, nothing seemed complicated to my young eye. I never understood much about how hard life could be, but I understood at a very young age that lending out a helping hand would always go a long way. I was never a materialistic being so my brain would generate in ways that were on a different level. I felt like I viewed the world in a different light. I always saved my money. I was taught that there would be times where my needs would come before things that I may have wanted. I thought that in doing so, I was preparing myself for how I assumed life would be.

I would help my great grandparents with chores while my mother was at work. I learned proper table manners from my uncle who would explain to me why different plates and silverware were used for different occasions. He also reminded me of how a fork did not belong in the butter. Growing up in their household, my favorite memories were sleeping in the middle of great granny and grandpa every night until mom came home from work to carry me up to our room. Every moment was truly a treasure. Living with my great grands expanded my dreams. Multiple times a week, we would head out to my grandpa’s farm, and it was peaceful. Having a peacock, pigs, and other animals was something that I wanted someday. Sounds like the best childhood, right? However, like most cases here in the city, I never mentioned my father.

It will forever hit home, to have a dad who stayed a few blocks away, but we never shared a strong bond. There were evenings that I stayed up waiting for my dad to arrive, and he never did. I can’t forget many nights when he did get me, he left me alone with his mother or with my older sister and other siblings while he went out. He was playing as if he really spent time with his children. Each time I waited, and waited, thinking that he would change, be the father that I’ve yarned for, but everyone has their season of downfall. His, was just inconvenient.

In elementary school, I was focused on my grades. Along with having good grades, I decided to join the cheerleading team. I always felt that I was a leader. I worked hard every day and was given the opportunity to become a captain. I was inspired by the sport and did research on cheerleading competitions to see if one day I would live out a life of a cheerleader. Around this time, I was challenged dearly. I was never the type to be involved in drama, but it so happened to come my way. One sunny day out on the playground, I was enjoying time with my friends giving piggyback rides. After a while, I began to get tired. I told my friend that I was ready to put her down. She then said that she did not want to get down and she did not want me to put her on the ground. So, I decided that I was going to carry her onto a big slab of concrete since it wasn’t dirty as being in the grass. Between piggyback rides or acting as a bodyguard, that was what my play days were like. I was incredibly strong at that age.

Before I made it to the rock, I tried to put her down again. She would not put her feet on the ground. I decided that after multiple attempts, I would gently put her in the grass. I just couldn’t make it to the concrete, and I wanted to do something else before recess was over. Of course, she did not appreciate me doing so, and decided to draw in a crowd. A mutual friend of ours, decided to take it upon himself to defend her. He felt that I was in the wrong. After recess, I thought the situation was over. No one said anything about it for the rest of the day.

The next day, I got wind around lunch that he wanted to fight me. I didn’t think anything of it because he wasn’t a threat. As usual, we went out for recess, and everything was fine. I was walking around and suddenly, a crowd surrounded me. I tried to dismiss myself, but I was immediately pushed back into the center. While I was trying to tell him that I was not going to fight, I remember three punches thrown at me. Two to the face and one to my stomach. After that, I immediately blacked out. All I could remember was sitting in the office with zero scratches or bruises. He came out crying with multiple scratches down his face, on his arms, and a few bruises. He was still bleeding. I thought I was going to be in so much trouble for fighting. I had a cheerleading event that same day. As a captain, I felt like I was not leading by example, so I began to cry. I talked to the principle to explain to him what happened. He ended up letting me go and told me to get ready for my event. Everything had been taken care of. He said that the boy would be punished for his actions. He laughed while saying, “He should be ashamed that he took on someone else’s battle and then got whooped.” Though I had been cleared, I felt bad that there was a fight and cried while putting on my cheerleading attire. The way he looked would forever resonate with me. Later, he apologized. I told myself, I would never engage in another fight again.

After a while of competing, cheering at games, and researching long term advances, I did not see myself as being a cheerleader. I asked around to see if it was any other sport, I could be involved in. There weren’t many girl sports, so a group of girls decided to see if we could join the boys’ basketball team. We were really trying to see if the district would allow schools to create girl teams. We were granted both. I can say that we were a strong group of girls playing on the boys’ team. We never complained about having time in the game because we had set plays designed for us. We were never left out.

One day at practice, I was dominating on offense. Every chance I got to play my position; I never missed a shot. The young man who was guarding me became frustrated and ended up tackling me on a play. Basketball had become football. But it made me stronger as a player. I was getting ready for how dirty the other teams could play. Seasons for basketball were long, and we worked hard. We also played hard, and it showed. The dedication to the sport even at young ages showed that we loved the sport. After dominating on the boy’s team, we were granted a girls’ team. My time then revolved around cheering for the boys, then preparing to play for the girls.

Around my 5th grade year, the high school hosted a homecoming parade where all sports, at all schools, and organizations walked from the school to the Board of Education. As I was ready to cheer my heart out down the street, I saw the high school band and middle school band. They were a head of us. In that moment, I knew that that was my next skill to obtain. Lucky for me, once I entered middle school, the opportunity would be granted. They sounded amazing! The music gave me chills all over my body. It was the same feeling I would get when playing ball. I knew exactly what I needed to do. I was going to be a part of them. As the parade started, everything was good. We hit all our marks and I was a proud captain. Once we were close to our destination, I was getting ready to do a series of flips. As I was running, someone in the audience yelled out, “Here go the big girl.” I was confused. Once I finished, I did not know how to process his words. If I should be offended or if he meant no harm. At that moment I begin to look at my body differently.

Another moment that assisted in shaming myself was trying out for the track team. There was only one meet that the elementary school participated in, but I knew I was fast to earn a spot. For a couple of days, we held trials in the hallway to see who was the fastest. I was rolling and I made it to the last standoff. I beat her as the biggest, I had beat all the smaller girls, so I figured I had earned a spot to be on the relay team. I worked hard in each race, and I did like track. After that last race, Coach Top said that he would tell us who would be on the team. I felt like this was my time to show that my body image was worth more and my strength carried out a light for athletics. Once he brought us back together, I found out that all the girls that I had beat were the girls who made the team. I didn’t know if it had something to do with being the niece of one of the teachers, something to do with my family, him not liking me, or an image thing. I asked why I didn’t make the team and he said it was because I was not fast. I was confused but things happen.

My last quarters in elementary school were tough. I had a plan to work hard so that I could become top student. I was tired of the same person being top student every year. Everything was fine and dandy. Home life was a little different. I was staying with my aunt because my mother was trying to pursue being a traveling occupational therapist assistant. My aunt made sure each night was memorable. We ate all kinds of different foods as well as we had the best pillow fights. I swear we were knocking each other’s brain cells around. But all was well, and I had no problem with my mother trying to grow in her field. When she wins, we both win!

But I remember one not so great morning. My aunt and I were headed to take her dog to my great aunt’s house before school. As usual, we would let him out the car and he would go up the steps into the house. However, this morning it was ice on the steps, so my aunt decided that it would be a good idea for me to carry him up the steps. Upon taking my first step, my right leg slipped across my body. My butt bone landed dead on the edge of the step. Both of my aunts rushed to see if I was okay. The entire day at school, I had severe tingling in my hip. It was almost impossible for me to sit down. My mother scheduled for a doctor’s appointment, and they ruled it as an injury I would have to work on. The doctors said that I would have to deal with it for the rest of my life. All I could do was stretch accordingly and attend physical therapy.

Fast forward towards the end of the school year, I was faced with another threat. The schools bully decided she liked they guy I was talking to. She figured that if she threatened me, I would leave him alone. One day in line as she decided to tell me her thoughts. It was as if she was coming to me as a woman. I cut her off and told her that no boy at this age will ever be worthy of me arguing with a girl. I said, “If you want him, you can have him. He is not anything special to me. He has nothing to offer my life and I am going to be somebody one day. By the way you are acting now you will become nobody.” She slowly turned around and never started anything with me again. When we entered the classroom, she decided to ask the teacher, “Aint I hardcore Ms. Sanders?” I laughed because she needed to feel like she had power or confirmation. I felt great to have stood up to the biggest bully and I hoped that my words would steer her into a new direction one day.

As the school year continued, I studied hard to meet my goal of becoming top student. The child I was going against put up a great fight. Our grades in class were close, paper after paper either meeting the same grade or one point away from one another. Towards the end of the grading period, things were heated. The stress of making sure every answer was right, every paper was perfect, was worth having that title. I was eager to know who had won. The day of the program, parents were all around ready for the program to start. My palms were sweating extremely bad, my hands were shaking, and I just wanted to get it over with. As the program went on, I can’t recall one part that I paid attention to. But then, it was time! At the end of the program the lady was ready to share our results. I was on the edge of my seat. A long pause was taken to create suspension of the moment. As soon as she said, ''my girl'', I assumed she was talking about the other child because that is indeed who she was close to. I was so sad in that split of a second until I heard my name. I didn't know whether to be excited or be cool, calm, and collective. But of course, I was cool and enjoyed the moment while I received my roller skates. I had worked hard and took on a challenge that no one else would take. I was the top student graduating elementary school. What a way to go out with a bang and of course there was a celebration! Once we were getting ready to leave, I saw the other girls mother fussing and in denial that I had won. I knew those kids were going to burn out sooner than later. I pushed myself for good grades, no one had to force me.

When graduation was in the works. I was a bit bothered because I had been starting my loc process. My mother insisted that we combed them out because she did not want my hair to look like that for graduation. I was not at ease about the decision, but I allowed her to do my hair the way she saw fit. As the day came it was every bit of what I expected. We had a fifth-grade soirée. When it was time for me to walk up to receive my diploma, I slid down to the floor hitting a split. Somehow, I was the only one who stepped in the slick spot. Though I was embarrassed, the split was the highlight of the occasion. I didn’t let that ruin my day. We enjoyed our time, and the new journey was amongst us.

 Middle School

Over the summer I picked my classes and I made sure band was a part of my courses for Lincoln Middle School. The night of the first day of school I could not sleep. Once it was time to get ready, I thought I looked good. The ride to school I was blasting Beyonce to calm my nerves. When I walked through the doors, I was greeted by all the staff. They told me to head to the gym for further instructions. I was actively looking to find my friends from elementary school. Once I was comfortable, I was ready to explore. I wanted to be a part of every organization. I knew that I was going to play basketball. It being the only thing my father and I shared besides DNA. I truly believed that if I played my heart out in that sport, I could have that connection with him. So, our connection grew only because of it. To be able to play with him and his friends made us close. It was what we both could relate to minus being father and daughter.

As school progressed, seasons ended, and new seasons began. Volleyball season was quite wonderful. Learning how to serve was my favorite because of the power I had. Serving was my strength and spiking was my weakness due to my height. As school continued my progression in the band did as well. The instrument I decided to play was the bass clarinet. I chose that instrument because of the role it had in the band and its sound. It was very deep and distinct, yet rich and earthy. It played a key role in the overall sound of the band that I wanted to be the controller of. Meanwhile, as the year continued, my basketball coach came to talk to me about trying out for track and field. I had initially told him that I wanted to run. Deep down I wanted to redeem myself and prove that I was fast enough to compete. I even had my mother buy spikes. But he insisted I become a thrower solely off my build and strength.

I listened to what he had to say but I did not know all what a thrower could be. He sold that sport to me in a way that gave me the impression that I could be the top fast. So, when I went out for tryouts, I realized that the same coaches who coached volleyball were over it, I decided to give it a try. The two events were shot put and discus. Both were unique in their own way, and each required a different type of technique. I was determined to master them both. During season, I met a guy thrower who helped and encouraged me along the way. He played a significant role throughout the season bringing in knowledge from the high school coaches that we were not able to receive. The season was good, and I enjoyed being a part of the track team, meeting individuals who I became good friends with. He pushed me to become better and no matter if the coaches were present or not, we still practiced.

On the flip side in band world, competitions began to roll around. The songs I picked for the individual contest were competitive pieces. Through hard work and dedication, I was able to play the songs with ease. During my first competition, I was nervous. Not because of thinking I would mess up during the song, but because I knew I tend to get nervous in front of a crowd. As time went by, it was finally time for me to start. My instructor started to play, and I was supposed to make sure I was in tune, and give him the signal, when it was time for me to begin. In the beginning my sound was a little shaky but as the song went on, I became confident in myself and played the song with ease and before I knew it the song was over. Everyone applauded, and I felt that I had done exceptionally well for my first year in band. A couple hours later, I received my results. I was shocked that I had received first place, but the fight was not over yet. Now it was time for the entire band to compete. After receiving my own medal, I was excited to play with the other band members and there was not a sign of any type of nervousness because it was not just me playing in front of a crowd. Once our name was called to play, we walked with grace to our seats. Everyone made sure they were tuned properly, and it was time to show what our hard work and dedication created. We went through each song with ease, playing the next song even better than the last. Before we knew it, all songs had been completed and the entire audience was on their feet for an outstanding performance. After the competition was over, we were presented with our results. Our band director announced as we were eating lunch that we received first place. Everyone was ecstatic and ready to celebrate.

After all my goals were met towards the end of the school year, April 22 was quite interesting. The day was Earth Day, so the school decided to have the teachers and students pick up trash around the school. Everything was cool but a certain boy, who had been my friend for a while, decided that the entire time of picking up trash that he wanted to mess with me. We were both having a friendly battle to see who could pick up the most trash and by the end of our community service he decided to ask me to be his girlfriend. Of course, I said yes, he had all the qualifications. He was well dressed, did not sag, clean clothes, faithfully wore a belt, and he respected me. We held hands the entire time walking from outside to our classroom. We were happy showing off that we had finally made it official.

Not much went on over the summer because of where we lived, even though my mother knew my friends’ parents. They could come to my house and spend nights, but I was not allowed to do the same. At some point this created problems for me. When I did talk to my friends’ parents, more than most asked me if my mother thought that she and her home were too good. They insisted that their living conditions were beneath her expectations to allow me to come over. At that age, I did not fully understand. I just wanted to be with my friends. Then another problem arose, because of where we lived not many people had cars to take their children where they wanted to go so hanging with my friends slowed down.

My mother thought she was doing too much by picking up my friends so that we could enjoy one another's company. It was as if she did not understand the struggle of most single parents who lived in the projects. Even I understood and never judged or complained about any one’s situation. So as summer came to an end, 7th grade year was about to begin. I had my goals in place. I had my list in order that I would be a part of all sports, band, and continuing my long streak of being on honor roll. Basketball season was amazing! I had my first highlight. We were going against Clark Middle School. The stands were filled. We were in the lead by 20 or so points. It was the fourth quarter, and all eyes were on Lincoln. Clark went up for the shot and missed. I got the rebound and before I knew it, I was dribbling down the court dodging players left and right. All I could see was the goal. This was my moment to have a lay up to myself and I took it with no hesitation. I went left then right and went up for the solid layup. It spun around the hoop and went in. The crowd went wild! Clark called a time out and I could hear the coach fussing about how they could let a power forward make that type of play. I walked over to my coach, and she said, "I am not mad at you, you did great." After that day my confidence in being a better ball player was at its all-time high. Season continued and the biggest game against Cahokia came into play. The game was tense and overwhelming. We had not won Sectionals in a long time. All players were vital. After half time it's known that teams switch goals, but in the light of the moment, I forgot and made a shot on the wrong basket. Everyone was devastated. It seemed as if we had no chance in winning. However, I took on full responsibility of my mistake. I told my team to trust me that I would make up for my actions. They asked me how and I told them just give me the ball. They trusted me, and all things worked in our favor! I played my heart out that night, beefing up my offense and defense to new levels. I did not know that I even possessed those skills. To make a long story short, we won and set the tone. We all worked together as one. Most importantly we had trust in one another, and it showed tremendously.

When Regionals came, it was time to show the predominantly white team that we were coming to make noise! However, I was injured due to my carelessness of running around in the classroom. I had sprained by ankle and my position on the team did not have a strong back up. Throughout the entire game, watching the other team run through the middle of the girls was horrible! I felt like I cost my team that whole game. My thoughts were racing in my head. I kept asking myself, “What was I to do with a sprained ankle?” The only thing I could do was sit on the bench and watch the remainder of the game. There were multiple times I would ask coach to put me in just to be able to help but we both knew that that was never going to happen. I believe that I was the saddest person that entire night. In my mind that was never how the game should have gone. I do not believe we would have lost and if we did it would have been a very close game. After my ankle healed due to going through another round of physical therapy, it was now time for volleyball season. All was well until our first game against Cahokia. It was my time to serve, and no one could return it back to my team. I was happy in the moment, but I never knew that something horrible was about to take place.

Upon the sixth time serving my arm was tired. My teammates were telling me to switch from over -head serving to underhand but I was no longer confident in that type of serving. Three more serves came after and upon the fourth time serving my arm became numb and I could no longer move it. I was then taken out of the game and asked if I wanted to call my mother to explain to her what happened. In doing so, she could not stress enough how important it was for the coaching staff to have taught us the proper way of serving. Once I was off the phone, the game was over, and we had won. Many games after I was still having problems with my shoulder so once again physical therapy was the result after many tests were taken and no one could find out what was wrong. By this time, the entire physical therapy department knew who I was by name as soon as I started treatment for my shoulder. However, after therapy, track season started and due to certain ranges of motion, I was not able to throw discus but with shot put I had no problem. I worked hard on trying to strengthen the muscles around my shoulder, but nothing seemed to work. By doing so, the incredible strength that I already had naturally became greater. This caused many problems for me during middle school. At times, I did not realize how much strength I had. Playing with the guys became more so of the guys being afraid to play. I would hit too hard or as they called it, "man handle'' them. I could not associate myself with a lot of girls because they believed that a girl with my type of strength had to be gay. Once I started training for shot put, middle school life became a bullying environment towards me. I would try to be involved in different groups, but it seemed as if I just did not fit. "Gon with your gay self" became a normal thing that was said to me, and guys would call me, “little dude”. I did not understand how I could avoid those types of situations. If I hung out with just girls, it was said that I liked them and if I tried to hang-out with the guys, I was considered one. How in the world does a person have any type of connection if I’m always being labeled as something I was not? However, in the mist of that, I never had a thought of not being a thrower. I was good at it, so I continued to do so. Since shot put was not an issue, all my time and dedication went into being the best. Season came to a near close, and I had qualified for the state meet, seated in the number one position.

When state day came, I was ready to dominate in the field. I have always believed in the element of surprise so of course; I only took three warm-up throws just to critique my technique. I was throwing distances that made my competitors believe that I was not a threat to them. It was quite funny to see the reactions on their faces as I threw literally right in front of me. At this point, competition was about to begin and being seated as number one in a rotation of throwers I would automatically throw last. It was finally my turn to show all my hard work and dedication. I showed not one smile, never talked to any of the other competitors or shared valuable information about my season to them. All I was ready to do was show them why I did the thing I did. I walked to the ring and studied my target as to where I needed to throw. The crowd was quiet as I walked to the back of the throwing ring preparing to glide. I took one deep breath and took off. I threw and never looked to see where it landed. As I was walking out the ring, the crowd went wild! I had thrown further than anyone else on my first throw which then released a lot of stress and pressure I had built up. After that, the other competitors began to mess up their throws because they were trying to out throw me. My time came around again and at this point I was in the lead by a good number of feet, so it was time to relax and have fun attempting to beat my previous throw. I did the same routine, walked to the front of the ring to find my target, set myself up in the glide position in the back of the ring, took a deep breath, and took off. I still did not look to see where my throw landed, and the crowd cheered even louder than before. I had set another personal record, but the fight was not over yet. For the last round of throws I could tell that the other girls were so frustrated and confused that the competition was somewhat over before we could even make it to finals. A lot of the girls continued to scratch throws by either falling out the ring, throwing out the sector, or just not approving of their throws so they purposely scratched. It was my time again, same exact routine as my past two throws. My God! I had thrown further than ever before. I threw 32-04.5 feet, two feet ahead of 2nd place. It was over! Everyone was excited that I had won. Yet I don't recall being as excited as everyone else because deep down I've always desired more than just a state title.

I was offered to eat whatever I liked, chocolate, any type of candy, and soda. I really did not want any of those things. I was just happy that my event was now over and that I could relax. Once we arrived home after the meet, the next day the family took me out to dinner. It was a great evening and a way to end an awesome school year in track and field.

Meanwhile in band, I switched instruments because I wanted to learn how to play the alto saxophone. Not long after I had been playing the instrument, I had been rewarded to be first chair, head of the section. Just as bass clarinet I strived to be great, and when competitions rolled around, I endured the same outcome as well as the entire band. We were the true definition of one band one sound. On the other hand, I called myself still being in that same relationship with my Earth Day love. I still felt a huge connection with him so I thought we would last throughout the summer. However, we shared different levels of maturity. He was his age, and I was extremely above mine. It didn’t last too long after school let out, so I decided to chill and if something came during the summer, I would pursue that.

Summer after 7th grade year came, and I decided to go to Nebraska to see my godmother. While I was out there enjoying my time, I so happened to be talking to my play sister and we were discussing boys. I told her I really was not looking for a relationship, but it would be nice to just have a boy as a close friend and if it turned into something else, I would be just fine. She then introduced me to her friend at the time, Thomas Bryant. He was 4 years older than me, but I decided to talk to him anyway. We talked the entire time I was on vacation, and I could tell he was sweet, a gentleman, yet goofy, and well mannered. After I got home, my play sister and I decided to meet up at the park, so she could take me to introduce myself to him. I remember that day my mother did not want to take me to the park, so I asked my dad to do so. When I met her out there, we had told my father exactly where we were walking to and who we were going to meet. He agreed that I could go with no hesitation. When I first saw him walk out of his house, I thought to myself that he was just my type, brown skinned, over six feet tall, nice smile, awesome personality. He asked me did I want to play ball with them. I would be on the opposite team, and we were always matched. I remember him trying to go up for the rebound and I knocked it out his hand but while doing so my nail took off some of his skin off his face. I apologized but of course he said it was okay. Time went by and I had not checked my phone and when I realized I needed to do so it was late.

I had missed calls from my mother and my father. I called my mother first and told her where I was and that I had permission to leave from my father who told her when she called him that he did not say I could go. She talked to Thomas, and he promised, in a very respectful way that he would never let anything happen to me and that I was safe. My mother asked to talk back with me, and she wanted his address to come to my location. After I got off the phone with her, I called my father and he immediately tried to snap on me. I was not going. He tried to make it seem like I disobeyed him and went on to do what he said not to. I had a witness as to what he said while we were at the park so of course what he was saying went in one ear and went out the other. Once both of my parents pulled up, I was still playing ball, but we were closed to the end of the game with one more to go after. I went to their cars to ask if I could finish the last game and my mother allowed me to. As I was walking back to Thomas, I could hear my mother fussing at my father, but I did not care because I was told I could go and hang with my friends. For the rest of the summer, we hung a bit, but my mother was really trying to see what his intentions were.

 Eighth grade year

Like any other end to summer, the school year was back knocking at my front door. I told myself the night before that it was a new year, and I was not going to remind myself of the constant bullying I endured the past year. My last year would be great, and my goal was to do well in my activities and hopefully make it through to top 10 in academics. However, things took a turn. I did not get to participate in basketball. A lot of the moves I had to make with my right arm would reinjure it. It was so bad to the point that I just could not move it for at least two to three minutes. That was the first decision I had to make. During that time, the only activities I was in was band. It wasn’t as bad as I thought. But being the athlete that I was, it hurt not being involved. I then decided to take a leap into a new style and cut my hair off, many would call it the "Big Chop". I did it because I wanted to be different, and of course in my mind, hair is hair. It will grow back so why not. What I did not know is that it would create another year of bullying. Prior to, I was back dating my love from the 6th grade and suddenly after he saw me, he immediately broke up with me. He said he couldn’t date me without hair. That really crushed my feelings because I did not think that it would be that big of a deal.

After that, another guy who had a twin sister, showed interest in me. We decided to start dating. I thought he was a nice handsome guy. Shortly after we started dating, he made it known that he wanted to date me in private. He did not want anyone to know we were together publicly. At first, I did not know what to say because I have never been in that type of situation, but I made it known that we were together anyway. I would go to his locker and try to play with him. After a couple days of watching his reactions towards my actions, I knew what I needed to do. I messaged him after school to have a talk with him and before I could even start the topic, he called me out of my name. He thought that it was okay to do so because in his past relationship, he referred to her as a "bitch". Funny story, his ex was the girl I had beat to become top student in elementary school. However, I was surely raised better than that, so of course he was dismissed with the quickness. After that, I showed no interest in another guy at that school, I ended up wanting to be with Thomas even though we had a four-year age difference. One thing led to the next and we were dating. My mother and I understood, knowing the age differences and what may happen etc., but he and I had already had a mutual understanding and he respected my wishes. I remember on the weekends he and his older sister, and her girlfriend would come by to get me and we would go over to the parks in Saint Louis just to enjoy being around one another. It was never a time that I did not feel safe in his presence. Some nights we just did not want to be apart, and they would have me out passed my curfew. I thought that I would be in trouble. However, I never was. I guess my mother knew that I was definitely in good hands. One night my mom dropped me off at his house and his mother was getting ready to go out. I remember her talking to me and she asked the big question of how old I was.

I was not going to lie at the time I was 13. His mother was not upset but more concerned as to why her 17-year-old son was seeing a 13-year-old. She then proceeded to ask were we having sex but that was not the case. We never had sex, nor did we have intentions on doing so. We were just dating and creating moments to remember. She also asked did my mother know and I explained to her that my mother was the person who dropped me off and we had a relationship where she knew everything that was going on. My mother always told me that she would rather hear everything from me first, good, or bad than hear it from someone else. Thomas immediately came to my rescue from the conversation I was having with his mother. As we walked outside, he instantly asked why I told her my real age. I told him that I had no reason to lie. After that we ended up hanging for some time then it was time for me to get back home. Any other time that we hung after that was in secrecy because his mother told him and his sister that they were not allowed to hang with me anymore. At times she would call, and I would be in the car, and they told her stories of where they were and what they were doing. I just went with the flow of things. One of the nights he just wanted to come and hang with me, was interesting. At the time my best friend Tory was spending the night. He came, we talked, we laughed, and upon his departure it began to rain. I will never forget walking with him to the car and as the rain poured onto our bodies, we shared the best kiss I had ever had. It was like a scene in a movie that I talked about over and repeatedly that night.

A few days went by and around this time I became close to his sister. She was like an older sis that I never had. One evening we were talking, and food became the topic. It came down that we both wanted Chinese, so she came to get me, we got food and she dropped me back off at home. It was nothing unusual, just getting food. That night I had this weird dream about her, and I felt the need to tell her what it was about. I never told Thomas so when he found out his first thought was that I was trying to get with his sister. This was the main reason why he never wanted any of his girlfriends to get close to her. However, I did not want her at all. The dream was not an indicator that suddenly, I liked his sister. It was just a weird dream that involved her. Well of course he did not want to hear it and we broke up. It was the worst breakup ever and I immediately messaged his sister asking her why she told him what I told her. She explained to me that he asked to see her phone and he saw the messages his self because she forgot to delete them. After that everything continued to go down-hill. He was mad because I was still messaging her. Then her girlfriend at the time, decided that she wanted to fight me. Thomas would message me what she was saying and run back and tell her what I was saying. It was messy for about 3 or so hours. I was so hurt and confused I did not know what to do. I tried talking to him about what we could do to get a handle on the situation, and he made it out that nothing could be done. He wanted nothing to do with me. He asked me to delete all the pictures and messages we shared and of course I said no because I did not see the point in doing so. At this point I was pretty bummed out. This was the first time I could feel what being depressed felt like. I barely ate, talked, or did anything. I felt like he played a big part in my life in happiness but now it was gone.

One morning my mother decided to take me out to breakfast. I thought it was just another day that we spent together but she wanted to talk to me about what was going on. Basically, she was telling me that if it is meant to be then it will be. But in the beginning, she told me that I was not viable enough to solve my own issues and that she would do that for me when it came to him. She even told me to tell him that when he thought about having sex though we were together that he should go elsewhere. We had already established boundaries, but I told him what she said anyway and then realized that was a stupid thing to tell him. After I got home, I received a messaged from him asking what I was doing. Then he proceeded to ask if I had deleted the pictures and messages between us and I said "no". His response was," See, that was me trying to start over but since you did not do it then that is it". I was furious texting him long messages pleading to him that we can start over and that I will be better with my actions etc. Everything that I said his response was either "I hear you", "uhm" or "whatever". After that he went on to saying that I do not love him and that I want to be with his sister but that was never the case. We were just close as if she were the big sister I never had. After a while of just seeing how we were and dry texting, I believe that he then decided that he wanted to be back close like we use to be. It was a very long time that we had tried to have an adult conversation on the matter. We finally came to a compromise that we would be friends but that we could not hang or date until I was 18. I agreed even though my 18th birthday was literally five years away. Of course, that did not last long as we were back trying to make things work as far as our relationship.

 After a while, since I was heavily battling the image of my body from the bully, I decided that since I was with Thomas it was okay to send rather explicit pictures. I had been doing it for a while just because I was not in a good head space about myself, so receiving that type of feedback was helpful. It was not one sided with the images, so I was not worried if they were to get distributed somewhere else but our relationship with what we were doing was solid and trustworthy. However, my mother ended up seeing the photos and she was livid. We discussed everything about how that could damage my reputation and all, but I felt as though pictures of me would do less damage than a soon to be 18-year-old engaging in also sending pictures to a 13-year-old. I was confident that he was trusting. After I told her that I wouldn’t do it again, I did because I needed and wanted the reassurance that someone liked me for me and liked the body that I was given. A lot of the times I just didn’t see what he saw and from everyone bullying or body shaming me his responses made me feel safe.

Once my mother figured out that I was sending again all hell broke loose. I was trying to plan my grand escape. I was writing furiously in my bible. Somethings that should never be written in my bible, but I was hitting a breaking point at an early age and didn’t know how to explain or handle it. My mother was not in a great headspace seeing my pictures, so it wasn’t easy to tell her or even explain to her what really goes on when I’m at school or doing anything really. Cutting my hair had the world viewing me as a boy, no matter where I went, I was mistaken even by cousins who knew damn well my mother had a girl. So, I was getting what I needed while the world was on my shoulder. After I was done writing in my bible about her, I decided to escape outside. At the time my uncle had company downstairs in the basement, but I was like, “I got to go.” He asked where I was going but I just went for it. We don’t do these things, so I had no plan in where I was running to, so I ran to the front porch. My mother got in her car and instead of me hiding like I had escaped, I stood there looking at her. She jumped out of her car and was running up to me to tell me to get in the house. As we were in the kitchen, and she was yelling at me for what I had done, she began to punch me hard. The very first time I felt something go off in me and imagined that her face was in front of me on the wall. I threw a rather strong punch. Yes, my hand went through the wall, and she immediately stopped. The spot on the wall if she stood next to it would have been the middle of her face. It was crazy and for the next years entering high school I would have no access to send or receive to my phone, but kids will always find a way to do what they want. I still never engaged in sex so what more can you get from a kid that doesn’t do anything wrong. Something is bound to happen. She just couldn’t deal with, so she sent me to be with my grandmother.

After a while of healing from that type of traumatic experience of a mother daughter fight, I refocused don what really mattered, school and band, it was now time to prepare for another round of state competitions. Leading up to the show there were practices where I threw 40ft throws and it was the highlight of training. I was so ready to make my moves and determined to put my name in the books once again. After putting in work, I received a letter from the track and field association that they wanted me to be the first female to read the rules and regulations of the meet to kick off competition. I felt soo empowered. I get to defend my title as well as be the first female let alone black female to speak. I was honored! Academically I was still apart of Top 10 so there was no need to focus on my schoolwork. As days approached to the state meet, I had everything to make another grand opening and exit in my middle school career. As the day arrived, I was extremely nervous, yet I understood what needed to be done. Before the start off the meet, I had to be at the starting line to open the ceremony after the traditional walk around the track for the athletes. The rules were split between a young man who went before me, and I had to read the second half. I kid you not, after hearing the guy read, and not really reading smoothly or with some type of professionalism, I was not so nervous about my section. Deep breath as I prepared to kill it and let people know where I am from, we can surely read better than some of the more well-known schools. Sure enough, I was on a roll. Every word was clean cut and precise. I put emphasis on the words that meant what they would and would not tolerate at the event. After I finished, I felt empowered! I had just let an entire stadium full of prospects know that I was not only a talented athlete, but I was gifted with speech! The audience went wild after we were done with the opening rules, and I was ready to make it happen.

The only issue that I still don’t appreciate is that I had to carry my implements a very long way. This made my arm a little weak. I was trying my best to recover but deep down I still knew that I was going to put out. As I was waiting for competition, I begin to prepare myself mentally. I listened to everything, but I focused my energy on what I need to do and then seeing myself doing it. Throwing is a mind game and once you get into your opponent’s minds it is end game! Once it was time to roll, I no longer could speak to my coach until after my throw was completed but kind of from afar. She knew I wouldn’t need too much of an adjustment, but we still had our way of communicating. As a game changer the first way to fool your competition is to not engage in conversations about your best marks and how the season went. As soon as the girls asked me, I would say, “Oh I’m sorry, that information is classified. I really don’t discuss that with my competition especially during an event.” This tactic gives them an idea that maybe you are who they fear, the last one on the list, top competitor. But here’s the deal when it comes to practice throws. There is absolutely no need to throw a full throw because that throw may be your best for that day! I would only work on technique and placement in my throws so I would intentionally throw about 10-15 may be less in feet. This gives competition the run around. In their minds they think that I did all of that talking about not saying my throws. I just threw crap, so I have some nerve. Meanwhile in my head I have them right where I want them, and I am at peace.

As the warmup throws were concluding, I could hear the talk of them not knowing who the number one thrower was and if she was even there. I kept calm; I made no faces to indicate who I was, but I was going to make noise louder than ever on my first throw! Another tactical move! All of this is not for the weak and most middle school throwers aren’t taught any of this! As competition started, names were called out and as the girls took their throws they kept looking to see when my name was going to be called. Obviously with throwing a throw of about 10-15 ft they assumed I would throw first as the very last person and least favorable. However, the show must go on and I just kept a straight face until every single one of them had gone. All eyes on me! Omg, she is the one! How? What in the world? I picked up my shot put, walked briskly into the ring, looked for my target, took my deep breath to relax, walked to the back of the ring, set up in my stance, one last deep breath, calculating my movements, 1, 2, BOOM! I let off a bomb and the crowd went Willlldddddd! My competition was defeated! They had a run for their money and the competition had just started. We had 5 more throws to go including the 3 throws for finals. After a long competition of sitting in the lead, in finals my coach said, “Kid, you have nothing to lose, so have fun with it and beat yourself!

The air was clean, and the crowds’ roars were in my veins! I knew my last throw was going to be the banger and so it was. I threw a whopping 36-04 feet putting 4 feet above 2nd place coming in at 32-07 ft. It was a time to celebrate and relax but I was still just content. Deep down I felt like the war was not over and the time to celebrate would come when I made it to the Olympics or at least collegiate sports. I knew one day the real excitement would come but these meets though exciting, only felt as a regular meet with no competition. But all was well, and it was time to figure out what journey I was going to head into in continuing my legacy as well as this gloomy cloud of the possibility of accepting being gay. Though I was still talking to Thomas, somehow all the comments and disconnect with bullying persuaded my likes.

High School

This typical debate was if I should attend East Saint Louis Senior High or Belleville West. No one wanted me to attend my city’s high school so the next city was where my family assumed I would strive most. Over the summer, I decided to join their summer basketball team and because of my grandfather, I was treated as if I was on a pedestal. I joined the summer team and immediately fell out of love with the sport because they changed my position from forward/ power forward to a wing man. I never truly learned how to handle the ball because my mission has always been down low. I grabbed rebounds, faked out people, and shot all the buckets. But at every turn of being in the game, the ball was taken from me several times. The way the city taught us basketball was too intense for how they thought basketball should be played with little aggression. I decided that basketball was no longer for me and that I needed to see what was going on with my shoulder.

With this decision I had to live with my aunt. It was definitely a different experience, but I was ready to see what being in a diverse environment felt like in school. For the first day my anxiety was at an all-time high. I’ve never taken the bus and I knew only a couple of people who attended the school. It was not long before I was targeted by many. I grew up watching a lot of high school tv shows and I can attest that everything that you saw from bullying to racism was displayed heavily at that school. Upperclassmen boys were jerks, and they were always picking on the incoming students. Some of the white children were disrespectful. One kid would literally step on the back of my shoes every single time he saw me, and my shoes weren’t cheap to be treated in that manner. I had a love for shoes like my mother so to have someone purposely put marks on them was not in either of our best interests, but I let it go. I did have a group of girls that I hung with who kind of made my transition better. I also met a girl who really wanted to date me though I wasn’t sure on the matter. She was pretty dope, and we had a couple classes together. We spent some time outside of school mainly on projects since I wasn’t really allowed to have company. We later dated officially or like a day, but I ended it due to not really being familiar with my feelings growing for her in that way.

As far as life with all the new experiences, it just wasn’t the same. I was missing culture, my friendships, a family-oriented setting, teachers who cared, the hype of being a part of your own, and it was becoming depressing. Then I had surgery done on my shoulder. It made my high school experience there even more depressing. Due to the crowded hallways, students bumping into my shoulder, not caring, was just a real drag of what the first half of 9th grade should have been. I had so much on my mind. From a different home to a horrible school experience, my time to move was coming. The kicker to the madness was homecoming. What I was used to was reversed. At the pep rally it was dull and boring. When they called for the freshman to rep their class, I honestly could hear a pin drop. Same with the sophomores and I was not used to that type of disconnect with the importance of repping your class and being as a unit to outdo the seniors. It was just a disappointment in the making. I felt so bad for all the minorities who had to be a part of a school that didn’t really have anything to be a part of. There were just too many factors that I did not want in my life, so I decided it was time to go home with no real notice besides my mother making the transfer happen.

East Saint Louis Senior High

Yes! My first day back in the city preparing to officially make my transfer complete. As I walked through the doors, immediately I felt a sense of belonging. I was nervous at first as I was guided to my class, but I was greeted with welcoming arms from my old classmates and newer friends. Everyone wanted me to sit next to them. I was home and ready to live out my true high school experience. The very next day was our homecoming rally and when I tell you how exciting, upbeat, and live everyone was, to the point where everyone embraced even the special education students to give them a sense of belonging. Hyping them up while they danced meant so much to me that I can’t even begin to explain how my emotions were running. I had missed half of my freshman year because parents want better for their children but better was at home the entire time. Every day was refreshing and open to what adventures I would see at school, if it was the teachers coming up with activities, students creating memories or even seeing classmates doing hair in the hallway because of wanting to look good at school. We all knew who we were and what we were bringing to the table. Everyone contributed to making that experience the reason why majority of us would relive our entire high school years in a heartbeat. Meanwhile if you ask those who were at the other school if they would attend a class reunion most said no. That is just not what I wanted to be a part of and wouldn’t want my children to have to transition in that manner either. Sometimes it is just good to be around your people because they know how to help and can share similar experiences. Not only that, but when it comes to how people utilize their resources, they will always pick home when they grow into those more predominant positions so it’s a revolving door of unlimited opportunities of growth and bringing in what is needed for our great city.

As time persisted with the greatest school ever, track season arrived. My shoulder wasn’t 100% but I could throw shot put. I had not gained range in motion for discus, so I decided to leave it alone. Everything was pretty good. Workouts were designed for my shoulder; coach was working with my technique, and I was winning. I couldn’t believe that my comeback was so strong after surgery. Meet after meet I was evolving into what I imagined it would be. I was prepared for the big show which is the state meet. I was in a decent heat from what I placed at sectionals so I thought how great it would be to sweep a medal if not bringing home a gold. At the meet I was overwhelmed, it was much bigger than the middle school meet with more prospects. It was so much to take in that I messed up my throws and left empty handed. The ride back to the school after the meet was by far worse than how I was feeling at the other high school. I was down because I knew I could have performed better, though I figured it was not my time to shine just yet. Once we arrived at the school my mother was there waiting on me. What comes next will surely be a shocker to many but a shocker that would stay with me for every state meet their after and I repeated the same result. I said to my mother, “Well I did not place mama.” Until this day I remember that she replied, “Yea, I knew you weren’t going to place.” I can write how bad I was crushed by her words but I showed no emotion to her but that scarred me for the remainder of my high school career.

As far as how I was with facing my life of who I was, dating from middle school to high school, thoughts rattled my brain from being bullied so I decided to stay clear and see who approached me. Of course, a senior on the girls’ basketball team showed high interest in me so I took it. I wasn’t too into a stud type of girl, but I wanted to see how it would go. We went on our first date, and it was interesting. We were headed to the movies but because of her car and slightly speeding we were pulled over entering the next city which at that point was her second one, so we decided to make another day to have a date. She ended up sharing with me one of her favorite wrist bands that I wore almost every day. But I still felt as if something felt off. She wasn’t any better than the average guy. She was cheater, terrible liar so why bother. I spent more time correcting and arguing than I should have, considering the significant age difference, but it was just the start of what high school dating was all about.

Then I saw her! I thought she was the love of my little high school life! There she was with orange hair! Could my heart extend any bigger? I was really contemplating if there was such a thing as love at first sight or if this was the girl version of how much I felt for Thomas. She was very well outspoken; she was the queen and she loved one of the most popular female rappers of that time. It was like I was a stalker lol. I asked around to get all the details before I officially made a move to talk to her. Oh, and when I had all the right words to date her, I swear she probably heard nothing that I was saying, nor did she pay me any attention. It was like the nerd of the block trying to set up an interview with the popular kids though I was also well known for sports, band, academics things of that nature. But I tried, and I believe I failed a great number of times before I could get a number, a conversation, or even a hey. But I knew one day I was going to date her or marry her.

After the school year my doctors reevaluated an old injury of mine in my hip and declared that it was snapping hip syndrome. They said that if I were to continue sports my issues would come later in life. I listened and my conclusion was to end track and attempt to go out for band since in high school we had to choose due to resources and time slots for participation and practicing. Every day that summer for band camp, I was slipping back into depression. In the beginning it was fun being around my old band geeks but my love for sports was greater. It was also becoming an issue for marching band. The repetition of lifting and holding such positions was affecting my hip worse than just doing track and field in moderation. After a while it just wasn’t it. I would work hard at band camp to get recognition for the awards they had for newcomers, but I was stripped of those things because they felt that since I did band in middle school, I was not necessarily a newcomer. I felt indifferent on the matter just because the transition from high school to middle school is not the same nor was the instructor the same. Give me credit where it is due. All of more is why I just decided to never return. Track was my thing, and I would just deal with those consequences when they arrive as far as my hips being out of place from time to time.

10th grade year

Tenth grade year was exciting. All previous freshmen were now transitioning from the 9th grade center to the main campus joining the upperclassmen. Some of the classes were mixed with the different grade levels so my high school experience leveled up. Nothing was dull. The activities we had were amazing. Soon thereafter, I would find myself in a battle with people I had no means of having beef with. We had a Black Out Dance party at the school, and I was enjoying my time with everyone. I danced with a few of my classmates and then an upperclassman came to steal me away. At the time she seemed cool, down to earth, but she was also possessive that night. As I was dancing with a close friend of mine, she persisted to push her off me and started to dance with me. I was enjoying my time, so I really didn’t think too much on the matter. After the dance I picked her up off the floor and told her I was going to take her home with me, how corny right? After that, I went on about my business. It was just a fun night. I didn’t really remember who she was and thought it would be the same for her, but I was wrong. A few days later as I entered the bathroom, she was sitting on the sink with some of her friends. She instantly remembered who I was, and we talked about that night. I did not know she was in a relationship because she was trying to claim me. This ended up stirring the pot with the LGBT community at the school and turned into a big ordeal. It went on for a little while and when I thought things were calming down, she persisted that we were now dating and that she had officially broken up with who she was with. I mean fine by me. It’s high school and I was single, so I really didn’t care what happened but her now ex was ready for vengeance. Another girl was also not happy with that decision.

As I was walking down the stairs, a short browned skinned cutie swiftly walked beside me. She was in disbelief that I was in a relationship and said, “I thought I was next.” After that she just walked away, and I was speechless. Sure enough, the woman of my dreams was a part of her exs friend group, so the situation became awkward for me. The very next day is when my patience was running thin. My new girlfriend decided she wanted to come to my lunch hour to hang for a bit. We were enjoying lunch when we notice food was flying in our direction from her ex and the group of people she was sitting with. This group included my crush. The cafeteria then ended in a brawl of a food fight which was great to see but I left because chocolate milk on me was never an option. I ended up telling the principles what was happening because I am not a fan of childish drama. I figured parties involved getting suspended would surely cause some uproar. On the way to my last class, we clashed with my crush, and she was heated and wanted to fight. We persisted to our classrooms but in last period I ended up texting my mother to tell her what was happening but also warning her that a fight was coming after school. I also warned my best friend but because she didn’t have her belongings with her, she was not there to witness what was about to go down. I still tried to avoid the fight by walking outside of the passageway we would normally take but wherever popular crush goes the crowd shall follow and she delivered. Mostly from what I remember before I blacked out was her climbing under the rails to fight and shortly after I remember the faces of those who surrounded us looking at me like I had done something terrible. It wasn’t the usually hyped fight. It was not aired publicly like every fight we’ve had. If it was not for a football player grabbing me to knock me out of my black out, I don’t know what would have happened. I could see her under my fist, and I even minimized the power of my punches but that was all I was able to do in my fight mode. I could not stop what all had taken place. Though immediately after the fight I felt terrible as I was placed into the back of the police car.

My girlfriend was hyped and, in the moment, while the ex who originally wanted to fight me came running at us in the police car to get handcuffed. Once in the building my mother was already present due to the heads up, but my crushes mother was looking for me to fight. Immediately my mother had her guards up, but everything was handled accordingly. My real issue with the altercation wasn’t the fight though. It was the security guard with the hazel eyes. Yes, I do understand that we live in the city and most people who fight already have history of being like that. But the way he was in my face and not letting me answer him was pathetic until he got his words handed back to him by another guard who knew me, my family and everything else. His apology wasn’t enough. As a worker and being professional, as well as an adult certain things are deemed unnecessary no matter the situation. As my crush was walking from the bathroom my heart hurt. I had literally fought my love and probably wouldn’t get a chance on earth to date or even speak to her but maybe there was a way. I initially ended up getting suspended not because of the fight but because of the threats I had coming from her group of friends and a few others. It wasn’t the worst, but I felt like a bad kid with two free days to eat at home.

Upon my arrival to school after my suspension I felt as if something was going to happen that day. After I walked up the stairs headed to my classroom sure enough one of her little friends immediately tried to bump into me. I saw it on her face because we crossed paths so I adjusted myself so that we would not touch. I already knew that if her energy crossed mine through physical touch I was going to black out and possible show no mercy just because she was nothing of importance to me. But God had my back and my days after were smooth. I just needed to focus on track while also figuring out how to apologize to my crush. As Track and field came into play, I was happy to tell my coach that I was back in business. They were excited and greeted me with open arms. My strength increased significantly, and I was killing opponents with kindness.

In school, one of my best friends ended up being a close friend to my crush who I had literally fought. Every day that my crush would call her phone and I was around I would answer the phone. First saying that I am so sorry that the events had taken place in that manner. I wouldn’t wait for a response before I would give the phone back to my best friend. I did that for a few months until football season had started.

Opening day of our first home game I wanted to be sexy, so I scheduled for my hair to be colored and retwisted in my favorite colors. Unfortunately, I missed the game due to long wait times for what I needed done. However, my best friend called to tell me that she and my crush wanted to be picked up. They wanted to go out to eat. I then asked my friend if my crush was okay with being in the car with me or even being near me at all. My best friend said that it was alright. I pulled up to the stadium and sure enough they were ready to get in the car. I was extremely nervous. We all agreed to go to one of our favorite restaurants but on the way, I had assumed my crush was in disbelief that she was in my car. She kept humming and laughing. Once we arrived at the restaurant, she sat across from me. We were now face to face since our altercation and I must admit it was a bit more at ease than expected. We didn’t talk a whole lot, but I felt as though it was the start to possibly making amends. After a while my best friend made it her duty to attempt to bond what was broken. Sure enough, after I had my crushes number I felt as though it was game on to make things right. On the other side of still being in a relationship, we had our issues. Not only was it a lot of backlash with rumors of her being loose but also, she would purposely do things that I had asked her not to. This made things extremely complicated. In my mind I questioned why she is allowing her male ex to walk her to class as if they were an item. Those types of things were deemed unworthy of continuing a relationship for high school.

As time progressed Track and field season arrived. I put in all the work that was needed to succeed. I was still recovering from surgery and my range for discus wasn’t there. I just wanted to solely focus on shotput until I could have that range. However, I remember one training session was not what I thought should have happened. My head coach decided that I was going to throw discus. When I was trying to explain to him that my shoulder was not ready for that type of activity he said, “Aint no college gone want a thrower that’s only throwing shot put! You must do both!” I felt some type of way because he didn’t let me have a say so, but I remember my mother saying when the adults don’t listen to let her take over. I did very quickly. The day my mother came up to the school after practice everyone knew something must have happened. Everyone’s eyes were so big and after we concluded our track meeting, the real meeting began. My mother opened with her concern that he wanted me to throw discus when I physically was not capable due to the surgery. The very next thing he said was, “Now you know me.” At this point my mother shut him down! She said,” No I don’t know you and if my child has come to you to tell you what’s going on with her body and you choose to ignore it then we have a problem.” I remember him saying that he didn’t want any problems, but I also remember him trying to direct the issue on to me as if I never told him what the issue was. But I let that slide and at that moment is when he had so much respect for my mother. He later said that no other parent had stepped to him. This was mostly because the parents were his athletes when they were younger, so it was just a revolving door of whatever he said goes. Even down to calling him dad or kicking a bucket of our cell phones across the gym floor but that’s for another discussion (chuckles).

After that the season went as expected. My goals were to redeem myself at the big show. But those words! It’s crazy how those words didn’t have impact throughout the season but when it was time for the state meet those words held weight! “I knew you weren’t going to win.” Those words ate into my soul for every throw that I had, and for that, I failed for a second time when I should have made my statement. The same sad bus ride to tell her the same sad results but I never told her how bad her words were still affecting my ability to perform. Often, we use such things to do better and outshine but when it comes from someone who is a key person in your life it can hinder progression. To make things more complicated, I ended up breaking up with my girlfriend. After I learned that she was involved with another girl who was currently in a relationship with my crush, it was over. I went over to her home we fussed, argued and it almost led to me running her over with my car. Of course, not on purpose but when you are trying to leave, and the person runs to the back of your car that is expected. She continued to sit on the trunk of my car so I could not move. It was just too much, and I just did not want to deal with any of that. I felt as though her actions were loud and clear. She did not respect me and if the rumors were true, I certainly did not want to be part of it. I called myself doing absolutely everything I could to ensure she was the one. I even did an all-out promise ring proposal in the cafeteria which was talked about for a very long time. Even then I did too much in relationships for people who did not deserve all of me.

After all of that, throughout the summer I became more and more close to my crush. We were both in disbelief that our now exs were fooling around with one another. I was also hearing news from one of my friends, of all the times my ex was having sex with all these different people since the breakup. I was kind of happy to have dodged a bullet but hurt as well because when I love, I love hard. So 12-06-12 was no longer a significant memory for me but what was to come was what I had desired.

11th Grade

Here we are into junior year, and it is just as hyped as my time back in my home city. We are moving through the ranks and are now upperclassmen. Not much had changed from summer between my crush and I so I figured maybe I could officially shoot my shot. Sure enough, I received an invite to come over. I was surprised by the transition from how she presented herself at school with being extremely popular and in her own world vs. at home no wigs, no makeup, bonnet not loud. It was like I was seeing the real her for the very first time and my heart melted even more. All this time I had finally had the chance to be up close and personal with my crush. Maybe we could be an item but what kind of backlash would we receive since we did fight. All of what had happened flooded my head, but we ended the night on a good note, and I also was able to snatch a good night kiss. As happy as I was driving home, bumping music, and in lovers land, when I arrived home to backup into the driveway, I was still focused on the kiss that I rammed the car into the gate so loud that my mother immediately came out. She saw the damage and just old me to go into the house while she parked the car. Worst and best day of my life, right? After, people were noticing that we were now an item and our exs were linked. They immediately threw out jokes. They were saying that we switched girlfriends and or talking about how my crush could talk/date someone who had fought her. We didn’t let it bother us but the back story to my best friend will make things a bit confusing.

My best friend and I grew up down the street from one another. We shared a bond like no other though, I knew she had the biggest crush on me. However, through the years I noticed that to preserve a solid friendship those ties should not be crossed. We spent nights together, watching tv, movies, playing games. She would fix me cookies and pancakes with the crispy edges. We would have fun outside enjoying times. When things were rough in her home, I would always come down to ease the tension. We spent a lump sum of time just being a part of each other’s lives. She was also a big part in my life when my mother would get sick, and I confessed God that I would want to take on my mother’s issues just to allow her to be able to be at peace. I was even her date to her 8th grade prom since my middle school did not have one. I can never forget the work she put in to bond the relationship that had been broken with my crush but then too she also knew how my heart felt about her since I saw her that day in the 9th grade. However, after years of not doing anything on that level for her asking as many times as she did, I finally engaged in a few things, and I believe that was the first mistake that I should have never committed to. Beyond that, since my crush and I were heavily considering a relationship and she was now friends with her she felt as though I was crossing the line.

One of my best friends’ groupies decided to take matters into her own hands and address me and she immediately got snapped on and never returned. I never understood why throwing a fit over me finally getting a relationship with someone she knew I wanted to be with should have caused paths to end in that matter. I felt as though if that was the case then she should not have mended together the relation in the first place. But being honest on the situation, I felt as though she was more so hurt because she had deep feelings for me the same way I had deep feelings for my crush. But making me out to be a bad guy and stepping between friends was not the case. Roughly 11-18-13 my crush and I were official, and nothing was breaking our bond from there on. Not even that secretly my once best friend and another friend of mine since elementary school were fussing a few times over me. For what reason, the world may never know. I just know that a few times, people would rush to me to tell me what was happening in another classroom pertaining to me. But other than that, I was cool. I ended up making a new best friend through our accounting class though we were already close, and she was amazed at all the events that had transpired. She said every year for track you have a new gf who comes out to support. I had to think, and she was correct. Freshman year was the senior basketball player, sophomore year was my ex and junior year was my crush. Hopefully this was the end to making those types of transitions. Track and field meets were bussing as usual, and my track best friends ‘group was live. We added a male member who was best friends with one of my dear friends, but they soon became the talk of high school gossip and not in a good way. Only time would tell but for the most part as a friend to the most difficult of times is listening to how both feel but the feeling isn’t mutual. Trying to protect friend girl but also protecting our friend boy was just a lot in its entirety. But for the most part listening to those around have negative conversations on the matter was the killer. But even then, you must let people figure out for themselves though you are seeing the bigger picture from all angles. There were nights that it was rough as a friend who loved my friends dearly but watching what was happening was not good.

As the season turned up, I was still battling towards not repeating what I had since repeated with what was a traumatic statement in my athletic career. Per usual my seating for the state meet was a go and per usual I came home empty handed in disbelief that I am stuck in a situation with no real way to know how to surpass what was happening and why. Only at the state meet would I blow all my chances to redeem myself. But coach then decided that it was my time to join the AAU team. I was excited to officially experience what summer track had in store. I was also able to utilize different coaching to learn how to advance with my throwing technique from a glider/ power thrower to a rotational or spinner. I worked hard day after day. I learned as much as I could in an extremely short time frame, and I also decided that it was time to see how well my shoulder could operate throwing the discus. As meets came I felt as though I was doing exceptionally well. I put forth my best effort and surprised myself. Once I made it to the opener for qualifying for the national meet, I knew what I needed to do. However, my coach leaned on me for my talents in the running department. I was highly upset because my focus was my events. But, for the team, it was more than just looking out for me even with having individual events. So, I had to prepare in a short amount of time to step in as an alternate for the 4x100 meter relay and the 4x800 to qualify the team. Unfortunately, we were disqualified for the 4x100 because of my hand exchange. Instead of my teammate just giving me the baton no matter which hand I threw back she persisted to try to correct me while we were running in the exchange zone, and I ran past the mark to exchange.

I was aggravated by the disqualification but at the same time I still had to focus on my events. I qualified for shot but discus was during the 4x800, and I knew I was not going to have time to rest, regroup and put forth my best effort. As the race started, I was the biggest runner in the lineup for last leg. But I kept on running and qualified the team for the 4x800. I was exhausted and dizzy, so coach came to the field to help me to my event. Everyone was helpful and understood what was going on. Most of the coaches were questioning why my coach ran me in events that I don’t run considering the importance of this meet for nationals. But I just took it as this is what it is and sometimes, we must adjust when obstacles are put in our way. Since I was late to my event, I was throwing against myself as well as warming up against myself. I couldn’t really see and to be a rotational thrower while dizzy was the most challenging experience. Also, with learning the technique only a month and a half ago I lacked muscle memory to be able to comfortably throw with my eyes closed following the technique. But God knows when it’s your time to shine. He will make a way. I ended up setting 3 personal records within my own throws and even after the competition was over and I qualified I was still dizzy and overly out of it from participating in 4 events. After we left the competition, it was back to the drawing boards. Nationals was bigger than any state meet. I would be going up against girls from across the United States. My fear was if my performance was going to be that of the state meet or if I was going to have a breakthrough.

Upon my arrival, I was warned that I was seated in both the 5th flights in my events. In Track the best is last, so I figured I had a good chance to place. After we were situated, I received word that the 4x800 team was no longer participating so all my hard work in putting myself in a position to not focus on my events was for nothing. But I couldn’t let my emotions linger on that because it was the bigger show. As shot-put 5th flight rolled around, it never failed that I was the smallest of all height and weight wise. On my first attempt I let out the biggest yell to boost my throw and all eyes were then on me. I packed a mean punch that received a great audience. Once I was in finals I was at ease. After the final throw had concluded I had made my mark as placing third in Shot put. It was amazing to be on a pedestal that I had not stood on since 8th grade year. I couldn’t let the excitement get the best of me though discus was coming up shortly. I felt as if this was my time to regain my confidence in the last three attempts to place at a high school state meet.

After the fourth flight of discus, it was time to warm up my body to see if I could produce a medal with my shoulder still not 100%. While we were warming up though I knew first place was not going to be in my desires just because my competition was throwing almost on a college level and had years of training. My only goal was to medal in the safest way possible to make sure that I don’t reinjure my shoulder. After the first 3 rounds my shoulder was tired so I did not put forth too much effort in finals. However, I was able to medal bringing in 8th place which was all that mattered. I was a happy camper and summer track had now concluded. It was time to rest and enjoy the remainder of my summer before school started.

12th grade year

It was now senior season! By far I would not have had it any other way. Highschool had been culturally amazing. I was still with my long-time crush so what else would enhance how great the year would be. My focus was being able to overcome those very words that have haunted me for years in track and field and it was also time to set the tone for what college I would have wanted to attend. From previous knowledge my best bet was to set up my own recruiting just because for some reason our best athletes in the city would go to unknown community colleges and not even pursue sports thereafter. I knew a four year would be the plan and a well-known one that had a coach who could mold me into a champion on an Olympic level. However, that wasn’t always my plan. I really didn’t see myself going to college. I told myself if I were to get it paid for, I would go but my heart was set on the military and their track and field team. The reason why the military wasn’t an option is because my mother disapproved, and it was ideal to go to a college that was close and not too far away because of her health. So, I had a lot of decisions to make though picking a college major was hard, none of them appealed at all. But I couldn’t focus to much on that. I would figure it out eventually. Since it was the last of what I needed to graduate most of my classes were relaxed. There was no need to overexert my brain or study for standardized tests. Junior year consisted of all the pressure. It was time to create a plan to dominate in track. Every day was call after call after call. Speaking with coaches, talking to admission directors, training hard to impress coaches who may have wanted to visit. I never lost sight of also taking time to relax and enjoy my last year of high school. We had several events that were filled with the best of what a village of students could bring.

Around the end of the first half of senior year is where the most spectacular thing happened. I was home and mama handed me my mail, most of which were from colleges but then there was one quite different. As I preceded to open the letter, I found it to be an invitation to Australia to rep my state and my country in Track and field. I could not believe that people were watching. A kid from the city, given an opportunity of a lifetime to compete on an international level without first competing at a collegiate level. After discussing the invitation with my mother and family, we decided that we were going to attempt to make the trip happen which included fundraising about $6,000. The trip covered flights, majority of the food, hotel stay and the cost for vacation after competition to Hawaii. What more could I ask for in a trip with the sport I loved most? Now it was time to weigh out my options of what college I would attend. I received letters from an Ivy league, community colleges, historically black colleges and universities, Division 1-3 institutes, military track and field programs, colleges on the coasts. The number of schools were overwhelming. I did have one school from my childhood that I always wanted to go to, and I was waiting to hear back from them just to see what they were offering. Time would tell which one would be the best one but with the first half of the year ending I knew I needed to pick who I was going with.

At the beginning of 2015 we had already started indoor season and I hadn’t lost a meet in shot put. I was heading into our final meets in Chicago strong. Of course, I continued to defeat my opponents in sight as well as my very last indoor throwers relay. It was the most exciting of them all. We rolled and I will never forget how hyped the team was to see us push passed those on the other team who were participating and weren’t throwers. Some teams would by all cost cheat to get extra points needed to push past my school because we were the dominating team wherever we set foot. However, the type of training we received as throwers consisted of speed training, agility, ballet, and mile runs. We were powerhouses and losing was never an option. Sure enough, gold was what we worked for, and gold was what we received. After that meet it was time to transition into outdoor season now tackling on shot and discus.

Outdoor season started like no other! I was strong, fierce, and making a name that would carry weight as I transitioned from high school to college. I was the thumb of the team and I made sure we were well represented. My team and group of friends were trying to accomplish what would be the best closer to a wonderful high school experience. We worked seven days a week, we challenged one another in weight training, and we made sure everyone was good as far as classes needed to successfully graduate. The bond we shared as class of 2015 held its ground as well. We were a complete family. We set the standard at our wonderful school no matter what outsiders’ thought was happening. We were more than a city or kids living in a war zone. We were the future.

Track meets rolled around, and my game face never changed. I was humble yet hungry to break a curse that had hindered the very goal that I needed to reach. Meet after meet in shot put alone, I was untouchable to the point I was given a new name. I was the Queen of the Ring! I never took those words lightly as the announcers would say it at every meet. I held that close to my heart and from there on I rolled with the punches. But I also knew that it was close to my time in picking what school would be my new home. Since I had so many options from literally everywhere, I needed to focus and start going on visits. I knew that once I set foot on campus, I would get my sign through feeling, so it was a mission to conquer.

After I narrowed my list down to my top 5, took a trip to a school where the Head Track coach was a coach the produced a lot of the elite throwers in the Olympics. I was excited that he was interested but the entire process of communicating with him was just off. He never spoke to me directly when he had questions. Since my dear friend was an athlete down there for him, he decided to communicate through her what he wanted to ask from me. She was text me throughout the day with all these questions and I really felt some type of way. I felt as though if I was as important to him and he truly wanted me, then he would be messaging me himself or like all the other coaches who would call me throughout the day when they wanted to talk. Since it was senior year, the teachers would allow us to take calls so there was no issue.

 When I went for my visit, the vibe on campus was not of a place that I could potentially see myself or visualize myself walking campus with friends and being happy. The dorms were not the best either and I knew I would need a bit more space than what was given. After I took my tour and met with the coach at the track, I felt a bit more at ease there and I was excited to see all the elites there getting ready for their training session. For the first time I was around them all and I felt as though being around them would indeed boost my performance since I never really had true competition since I started. The competitors my senior year were just ready to graduate and when I showed up to a meet, they didn’t want to compete with me. Several would say that there was no point. Could I sacrifice the unjust feeling of the campus for the sake of track or would I need to consider every factor given.

Days after my visit my dear friend who was at that college began to express to me her concerns as well as complications I may endure while being under the coach’s wing. She had just injured her knee and was no longer able to perform now. She knew that she needed to sit out for a couple meets to recover and it was something that both she and her coach agreed on. However, he decided that she should compete anyway and from that meet is when she did more damage than she could have possibly imagined taking her out for the rest of her career. In that short span of unfortunate events, I knew that maybe he didn’t treasure his athletes enough to adhere to injuries. I had to protect mine which included my shoulders, knees, and hips. I wanted someone who understood and did what was best. After she was out the game there was little that they exchanged before his focus was on who would later become the Hulk of Throws.

I remember for my second choice around the end of January in 2015, after we made contact, he wanted to drive to my high school to see what I had to offer. We had scheduled for his visit the following Thursday and I was amped. The day of all I could think on is that he was going to come watch me practice and that I needed to have my game face on. School was just school at that point. Once that last bell rang all the butterflies were everywhere in my stomach, but I was going to put up a show. After a while coach had called to say that he was there. I rushed to bring him to where we were. The day was slamming, and he was surely impressed. Now it was time to show him what I could do in the weight room. We were already in a battle with one another with weight competitions, but I was super amped and ready to throw up a big squat number! Sure, coach was able to watch me build my way up to a 385-pound squat. I was yelling and all, digging deep to be able to bring that weight back up. Once I racked it, my teammates went wild in the weight room! It was one of the best practices and I was happy that he was able to witness me in my prime for that time. After practice was over, we discussed some of the things that he wanted to do next, and he had a solid communication with my mother. We were going to head into what would be an Official visit. The school then sent emails explaining the rules of how an official visit is done and what I would need to have done myself. It was the most exciting experience and one that my top choice school did not open my mind to.

Once we were situated it was time to pick a date for my visit. We decided that it would be best to have it when they were having a home meet so I could see the entire team in action. This was the most exciting part. To make it even better one of my competitors was also coming the same time so we were able to really get to know one another as well as discuss how we felt about the school in general and coach. After eagerly waiting for my visit as well as defeating my own competitions, it was time to make the drive to see what this school was all about. Once we arrived, I was able to meet up with the coach and he was waiting for his other recruit to join us. He took all of us around the entire campus. It was beautiful! I felt that feeling as if I was home. This was the campus, but I did not want to be too eager in my decision just because I had a lot of choices still. I viewed the dorms, and they were relatively cleaner and more up to my speed. The campus was well put together and a bit more upscale. I could tell that a lot of money was being poured into the campus. There were so many things that I would have access to, and it was the perfect experience. They had a pool that looked lovely and different places to eat. Inside of the housing that I would have had there were two different places I could choose from. One being all you can eat, and the other had more healthier items. Once we did our tour of everything around campus we were headed to the heart of my decision. As we arrived at the Track stadium, I fell in love more so over the other school and I was very well invested into my time there. I didn’t know that we would also be in for a treat. The throwers took us bowling where we could just let down and really get a feel of who they were. It was amazing!

The very next day it was meet day and the atmosphere was lovely. The team dominated and I was able to meet everyone. The throwers basically wrapped their arms around us and took us in like we were already signed. We were able to get a sense of belonging as well as see them in action and how they celebrated winning. For the most part the teams’ different events would have their own homes where they roomed together, and their scholarship paid for their portions. The throwers home was like that perfect depiction of how I would have loved to live once I became a junior or senior. I did want to first live my college life on campus because I didn’t want to miss anything. After the meet my mother was ready to go home but the team as well as the other recruit wanted me to stay to the point where her parents were even explaining how they could drop me off at home just to stay another night. It was so overwhelming, but I ended up leaving with my family and honestly, I was convinced that no other school would provide that, and I wanted to sign immediately.

Once I was home and I gave it a few days, I was advised that I needed to tell the other coach of my decision. Once I called him to tell him that I was going to choose the other school he immediately laughed. The type of laugh that was like there was no better coach than him. But if he truly was the better coach regardless of what he produced then he would have been better as a person, recruiter, and communicator. Those are what I look for even if you can prove the process, but I also look for those who take care of their athletes and can separate from winning when things need to be addressed such as injuries and health concerns. That’s what sticks out to me the most and only time would tell with what he could have had in an athlete.

This was huge and I wanted a proper signing day like the ones I see when the football players get at my school. I wondered why the track girls never had one. I found out that coach didn’t allow us to have one because he thought it would give us a big head as well as it would potentially hinder us from continuing to produce what we need to after, to advance and smash at the state meet. However, signing your National Letter of Intent to a D1 institution doesn’t scream to me that I would mess up leaving a legacy in my 12th grade year of high school just because I’ve chosen my college. After that the rest was history, my coach said if we could get it approved than he would allow it. My mother came up, worked her magic, and boom it was approved.

On April 15, 2015, I was able to utilize a room in the school. The principles provided balloons etc. and even my favorite teachers left their classrooms to come down to witness a great moment in history. I had the newspaper reporter and all. I was the face of two states sports sections, and it was the best kick off to an important meet that was also the same day! After the signing, I took my time to be interviewed for the newspaper and then it was time to head off to competition. I proved that what my coach thought was invalid, was valid and important. That day I achieved not 1, not 2, but 3 gold medals. I won shot put with a throw of 42’2”, Discus with a throw of 131’5” and I ran first leg in the throwers 4x100 meter relay with a time of a 12.8 second split. That was surely the way to make my day the best! I was able to also take pictures with who would be my roommate in college. Though we were competitors, we were getting ready for a bigger challenge. Collegiate sports were calling both of our names and we were ready to show out.

On the flip side I was making significant progress with my fundraiser as well as getting ready for prom. I had several different ways of bringing in money. I was selling drinks, and chips at school, hosting house parties, and just spreading the word around the school and through all my social medias. Time was running down, and the end was coming for all high school. But our class was so in tuned that it was never a dull moment. We were turned up every single day and my most significant moments revolved around my friends and our bond was so strong. As a class we also threw a few Black Out dances for the entire school to help raise money for our functions. The most memorable fundraising event was our Senior Car Wash. We raised so much money and we didn’t expect so many people to have shown up. We held it on the side of the school, and we had a system to get all the cars cleaned. It was funny because my father ended up rolling through and he was making it known that I was his daughter, but he wasn’t there for anything important, so it was just awkward. But other than that, the memories of that event will live on forever.

The next big event that we were preparing for was prom. We had our theme picked and our building, we were just ready to have it. The part of prom that I really didn’t put too much thought into was that I was in a long-term relationship with a girl. The same girl that I had been through more than enough and the same one who was always present for family holidays as well as I was present for hers. The same girl that I could not take to prom as my date because my mother felt that that was, I believe taking it too far but at the same time rented out a hotel room for us to spend time thereafter. I could never understand some of the choices I was given but if I could at least get some part of a happy ending I just had to roll with those punches. Too much was going on to sit there, making a big deal over that when I was ready to get up out of this city to bigger things. I remember one day in English class we all were discussing dates and in my friend’s group there was one of my little crushes and he was like, “I’ll be your date”. I was surprised like, “You will be my date for real or are you playing?” With a straight face he said, “Nope, I’ll be your date. Just tell me the color and I’ll get the stuff.” When I tell you it was just that easy and I bet it made my mother the happiest that I had a male date for that event.

After I found my dress that I knew was going to be the one, I was set. Everything was in order, and it was time to show off my “date”. The guidelines were taking all the pictures together, make it look good, when we get to prom, we do what we do especially considering I was in a whole relationship, and then he would bring me back home. Once everything was in order, our meeting spot was my grandmother’s home in Fairview. I dressed there and was ready for my date to arrive. When I walked out, he was looking at me like dang she looks good! I can honestly say that I felt good. My dress complimented me well. We took so many pictures together but most importantly my forever crush Neil came to see me off. Out of all the pictures I have of that special day, I believe I smiled the hardest when we took a picture together. Even then if I could have had the chance, at that point, to see where we could have taken a relationship, I would have. But that was neither here nor there but maybe one day.

As my date and I pulled out the driveway of my grandmother home, it was time for everyone to follow us to the meet spot to take pictures. We were headed to the schools parking lot that way when it was time to head to the hotel, we would all arrive somewhat at the same time so the red-carpet effect would really take off. Once we arrived, I saw my friends and their dates. Honey, we all did that! We rocked it up, down, and all around. It amazes me at all the fancy cars we all had and thank God no one wrecked them. It was a surreal moment that made it all worth it. Once we made it to prom it was lit for what seemed like a short time that we were there. After we ate everyone was pretty much ready to hit all the after parties. We knew who the prom king and king would be, so it was time to party! After we left, my date safely dropped me off at home, and I immediately changed into my after-prom outfit and took off. I was meeting up with my friends outside of the club we rented so we could go in together. My girlfriend also arrived, and it was an extremely great time. We had no issues and was able to enjoy all of it.

Once we were ready to eat again, I left with my love and headed off with her group of friends for late night munchies. Everyone pretty much had their own rooms they were going to, so we headed off to our hotel. I told her what exit the hotel was off and once we got on the highway, she decided that she wanted to race. Mind you all she had a mustang, and I was riding in my Chrysler 300. We all know who was going to win so dare I try? AND DID! And LOST! But once we were off the highway, I went ahead to have her follow me to the hotel. We were there for the weekend, and it was peaceful. I really did enjoy my time out and honestly after prom, school was just a drag. As seniors we were pretty much done with work and everything else so of course here comes the infamous senior skip day. I believe we all went to school that day and we just left. We carpooled and went out to the park that became our spot. We kicked it! We had water balloon fights, the guys barbequed, we played games, they played basketball and we had so many pictures. It was a great day to bond with my fellow classmates.

The next event was a senior day where staff had things planned for us at the school and outside of the school. When I tell you the best moment that I remember was that we had water fights in the park while it was raining with our teachers but, the part I’m getting to, the ultimate water fight, was crazy. The battle between buses. We prepared for this race/ water fight between both the buses. Team A and Team B. I commend those bus drivers for engaging the way that they did because they will forever be the best. We were side by side headed back to the school having a water fight between buses while seeing who was going to make it back first. Of course, safety first but it was a true experience of what being a part of the city was all about. After we made it back, I can’t even remember who won because it didn’t stop there. I believe we had several days where water balloons were brought into the school and the objectives were to get the principles to the point where they did, and everyone was in on it not just the seniors, but sophomores and juniors were going hard. They were trying to enforce suspension and graduation privileges, but I feel as though at the end of the year relax and have fun with the students. My class made history as far as scholarship money rewarded, literally everyone was going somewhere after high school and our grades were overall pretty good. Enjoy those last days with the kids. We all deserved a break. Academically my class went through a lot of changes with the level of what was expected, the change from there being no honors to straight AP courses and we still killed it on all the standardized tests. I commend us for staying strong and a lot of us were also doing exceptionally well athletically, musically, with the debate team, and many other extracurricular activities provided.

Keeping the ball rolling, we then had our ribbon pinning ceremony, and we also had our senior luncheon. The most memorable moment I had on the day of the luncheon was we all came to school dressed to impressed. After our first few classes, we were to head to the lighthouse for lunch. In my first hour there was this guy. He couldn’t stop looking into my eyes, I knew they were lighter than usual because they change colors, but it was like he was mesmerized. As they were playing spades he just kept turning around to look and eventually he then leaned his head back behind him to look at me upside down. Once he did that he then apologized. He was like, “I don’t know what’s going on, but I’ve never looked into your eyes and now I can’t stop.” The next memorable moment is once we were headed to our next class, I had on heals with my jumpsuit and was going down the stairs slow so I wouldn’t trip. Why I still trip? I caught myself but I was surprised that out of everyone who witnessed it, no one laughed, they just wanted to know if I was okay and if they needed to take my track bag so I could have a bit more room to go down the stairs correctly. I was super shocked but overall, the day was good, and we enjoyed our luncheon. We all looked so nice as well as ready to graduate already! Time was winding down and of course track and field took care of its own. I was going to state to do what I had to do. Or was I going to state to remember those haunting words and they leave high school with not a single state title. We would surely figure it out. But of course, I was still on my A-game in practice but since graduation was before the state meet. I was focused on tossing my hat in my lap (we weren’t allowed to throw them).

As graduation day came, it was a bittersweet moment. Everyone was emotional but at the same time I was experiencing it like I’ve achieved and conquered another milestone, but I guess I just felt like it still wasn’t the biggest so, I sat through graduation like just another day. I was happy that it was here. But I was ready for college and for different opportunities to come my way. The entire time we were in the lunchroom making sure we were all ready to make that walk, I was ready to get my chords. Now those, meant a lot to me because I worked hard for them. Once we were all lined up, it was time to shine. Since my cousin’s graduation was the same day, we had to split up the family. Of course, my great granny, auntie Winnie, my mother, her boyfriend would be present for mine. My grandmother went to support my cousin and his family. But after graduation we all went to dinner and my uncle showed for the occasion and we quickly found out that he had gotten remarried on us to who he was in a relationship with. It was a dope day, and he also got a chance to meet another one of his sons. It was a great night to celebrate with our family. My cousin and I both had chords which made the pictures boom more. There is never a dull time with the family ever. As we accomplish our goals in life, we know that we have a strong support system who will always be there rooting us on.

Now that graduation was over, it was time to tune into what I was trying to achieve at the state meet. I had one week to continue to produce what I needed to and now it was time to either overcome my curse or defeat it. I had made my mind up that this time would be different, and I walked with my head held high that this was it. This was the state meet that I would leave those words in the past. As I grabbed my bag to walk down the stairs of my mother’s home to head to the car, I stepped down wrong and my ankle rolled and literally touched the step. It rolled that hard, but it was so fast I figured that it would be okay. My mother saw it and her eyes were big. I told her that I felt fine, and nothing seemed off so we continued to head on out to the car so she could drop me off with the team. We took our last picture that we would take with the principle, boarded the bus, and headed to where the state meet was held.

Once we had arrived, it was time to get out, stretch and do a few run throughs to get a fill of the rings. We also had to set up our area for camp, so we’d have a spot secured. once we were in the area I started to panic. It was happening. Every track meet ran through my head, every tragic moment of throwing middle school throws at my high school state meet haunted me, and those words haunted me. I was frozen, I was screaming inside for help because I couldn’t move. My emotions were damaged. Then I immediately snapped out of it, not because I figured it out but because my coach immediately started to yell at me. He said, “What the hell do you think you are doing? Just because you are in a top spot doesn’t mean your ass can get here and not do anything! Get your ass over here and start helping to set up the tent!” The concern for me was as the right hand to coach, I felt that he should have realized that something was the issue instead of the whole, “I think I’m too good!” I’ve never thought that, showed that, or even said that ever in my career. But some coaches just have their idea of what they think is going on and in terms that could have been another thing that really intercepted my performance because the team knows I’ve never been yelled at by him ever and they were also appalled.

 I still felt fine and by that time I had forgotten that I had even rolled my ankle. I did my warmup, broke a sweat and threw some decent throws. I was confident that this was my time to shine, and nothing was going to stop that this year. After practice we went to the hotel to get our rooms and then is when I felt something was off. My ankle was swollen so bad that I couldn’t even walk on it. I felt like my world just came crashing down but I was trying to hide the fact that it was indeed not good. When it was time to have our team meeting, I still wasn’t going to tell them but there was no way to hide what had happened and the girls told on me anyway as I was trying to secretly walk straight to the room. I can’t even tell you what the meeting was about because I was dying on the inside. I felt like I made it this far to have sprained my ankle this bad on the biggest day and last moment I would have at a high school state meet. I had so many emotions, but my coach had my back as well as my mother. I had to break the news to her as well as sent her the picture and she was devastated. I commend my coach because he stayed in the room with through the night until I really needed to go to sleep rocking on my ankle. We iced it, he was trying to push the fluid, exercising it and all. Like how does this happen at the end game?

The next day came, and I felt better but with the technique I use for both shot put and discus it requires me to grind on the ball of my right foot applying pressure that I couldn’t even bare. How could I perform like this? When we got to the track, I immediately went to the trainer so they could attempt to make a miracle happen. They were able to wrap me up nicely, but they knew just as I knew how bad it really was. Without a doubt I opened my line to God because he knew how hard I had worked for that moment, and I was humbled throughout my entire career in sports and pretty much all my endeavors. It was never a time that I didn’t thank God but in this very moment I believe was the first time I had asked for him to help me overcome my injury to overcome those very words that haunted me every year. I talked to him so much in my head at that competition to the point I probably looked crazy laughing and smiling because he was showing me that he heard everything I had to say. All I had to do was trust him. I kid you all, I almost stopped trusting him in the moment that I was watching my competitors throw their practice throws because they were pushing up to the 50 ft line if not hitting it. I was asking myself how on this ankle? I’ve only hit a few times at practice in that range, but it wasn’t consistent. Was I getting ready to lose all over again?

Suddenly, I realized that I was thinking entirely too much. Where was my game face? Where were my tactics that I would use to fool my competitors? I had to get it together fast, or I would have never been able to focus. I remember saying, “God, you know where I am at this very moment. You know what has haunted me throughout these years, you know how hard I’ve worked to be here one last time and there must be a reason why I am here with a sprained ankle. What is it that you have in store for me and is this my story?” When I tell you all after watching those practice throw, I was more so in my head and having my conversation to the point I didn’t feel the need to panic anymore. I remembered logic. Most throwers will throw their biggest throw in their warmups because they still don’t understand how to play this type of game. As competition started, God didn’t fail me and though my throws were not the best, no one and I mean no one was able to produce throws that surpassed mine. In the class that we were in, my throws should have been destroyed! God did not allow it. No matter that they could throw 5-6 throws in warmups surpassing me, when it was time to get those throws down on paper it was indeed an intervention. Then when I was more at ease while talking to God and getting ready to throw again, I popped out on that ankle a 50 ft throw! But it landed outside of the sector and broke the edge of the concrete. In that moment the crowd went wild though it was a foul. They couldn’t believe where it landed. I had all types of coaches and parents rooting for me. But I couldn’t produce that throw again. So here I am coming up to the last of the competition with a throw that was surely beatable, yet I had a higher power on my side. Once the last of my competition threw her last throw, I knew I had secured the gold and without a doubt I thanked the Lord for keeping me together.

After that, competition was over, it was time to rush to the trainers to re-tape my ankle and get ready for discus. Shot put was my dominant event so I didn’t want to damage my ankle even more because I knew that I had to get ready for my international competition that was in the summer as well as make sure I healed properly for my collegiate career. Once competition started, literally everyone knew how much pain I was in. Even the officials were doing more on their part to get me my implement. They would run it in to me so I could reduce how much stress I was putting on my ankle. The difference between both techniques is that discus requires a bit more force in a longer spin because the ring is bigger than the shot-put ring. Though I did not give up on competition, I was not hard on myself to medal. I took my time with each throw to ensure that I would still at least make it to finals. My throws were alright, but my technique was not holding up enough to secure a spot for finals. My head coach wanted me to continue to spin but I took it upon myself to take my last of my three throws in prelims to power out a throw. I took a deep breath, stood at the front of the ring, and powered out a 120 ft throw that put me in a place to head into finals. I was proud of myself because I trusted in what I knew would be the best option instead of listening to someone who was still focused on getting those points. When finals came, I knew I wasn’t going to be able to produce because it was too harsh on my ankle. It was then generating issues with my hip injuries. I looked out for myself. I continued until the end, and I was most happy to secure 12th place. Discus for me was still new since after surgery so it was not as important. There would be other times. Once competition was over and I went back to the trainers to see what damage I did to my ankle, and they told me that I seriously needed to take care of it because it was still bad.

When I came back out, I headed to my family, and they were proud of everything that I did. They knew that I was working with the odds against me, and my story of that win would forever resonate. Of course, my coach saw that I had powered those throws and he was not happy. He told me that he was not pleased that I did not give it my all for discus. Though hearing those words stung I was not surprised that he would have said that. Some coaches will always be who they are and at that very moment I was no longer really under his coaching. My time had concluded, and it was time to think of what I needed to do to heal my ankle and prepare for Australia. Let’s not forget this is the same coach who would have rather I did summer track with him than expose myself internationally and bring home international trophies. But I won’t get too far into that conversation.

After all the races were over, we headed to the restaurant where all the seniors knew we had to give our farewell speeches. Everyone pretty much said what they had to say but I believe mine was the most emotional. I started off my thanking the team for their desire to be as one and lead us into the state meet. Then, I individually spoke on my coaches. When I reached the head coach it was a crash of emotions that I don’t think I was even able to say it as clear as I wanted to, but I was trying to explain to him my mental meltdown at camp which had absolutely nothing to do with thinking I was too good to help my team set up. Then I went on to thank my mother and then another emotional rollercoaster of thanking her boyfriend who had been in my life since elementary school and how much of a father figure he had been to me when my own father was nowhere to be found. My experience at that last state meet showed a lot as well as the power of my God.

Once we returned home high school had officially ended. Another great chapter had come and gone. Now it was time to bring home international medals. I practiced with the summer track team until it was time to make the biggest move of my life. I remember around the last few days of practice my coach said that he had some mail for me. I’m like, “Mail?” I kid you all the mail was college letters, and I was highly upset. This mail included Yale, University of Miami and a few more. Then, I later found out that Howard University was trying to offer me a full ride! I remember asking him why he had kept my mail for so long and his response was that I had already had my eyes set on my school, so he didn’t feel the need to. “OH!” But I let I go because what was done was done, and there was nothing I could do to change anything, But I had one of those what did you learn moments.

Moving on from that, I had everything that I needed but I was still waiting for my passport to arrive. As it was extremely close to my departure, I was a bit worried because it had not arrived. I believe it was a couple days right before it was time to go, and it came. I was happy until I opened my book, and my middle names weren’t correct. I was furious and immediately got I contact with the people who were over the trip, and they had explained that they would have my information changed on all my documents so it could match. We did not have time to fix it, so we just had to roll with the punches on that one. The morning of my departure my family came to see me off. I had on my given shirt, and they had given us the names of the other athletes who would also leave out with me. I felt a bit more at ease knowing that I would be flying with them since my family could not make it. After getting to know the other athletes and their parents, it was pretty much smooth sailing. The meet up point for all the athletes from around the USA was California. As we all arrived, we had about a 10-hour layover before we boarded our next flight to Brisbane, Australia. As a group we spent the next 10 hours bored out of our lives until we just kept asking different restaurants for forks so we could make fork sculptures. We also had games, but 10 hours felt like we were waiting an eternity.

When it was time for us to board our plane, I was super excited. This was the first time I had been on an international airplane, and it was huge. The seats were comfortable and the screens on the back of every seat had all kinds of new movies to watch. At that moment I knew this was a life that I was looking forward to. The plane ride was extremely smooth and after 16 hours of flight it was time to get off the plane. Stepping out in another country for the first time is exuberating. There is a big difference from the USA in which I immediately wish that I did not have to return. Every street, corner, sidewalk was clean. There wasn’t a spot of trash anywhere. The people were welcoming and majority of everyone that I saw was in shape or built. I can see why America is obese. The stores were even set up different. What tripped me out is that all the milk were on shelves instead of in bottles being refrigerated. They had so many different healthier options and brands to I just fell in love. Then of course I had to find the candy aisle and I wish I would have taken a picture of every single chocolate candy that I loved had about 10 or so different flavors. I felt like this was end game and that when I got older, I was leaving my home country.

Much of the time there was pretty much like vacation though we were told that we could not explore the clubs. Most countries legal age to drink and party were 18 which I was. I stuck to the rules though the people who I hung around went out every night. I just wasn’t in the mood to be caught and then be sent home on the spot. I was there on a mission to secure medals. So, days to compete were pretty much the last two days so I was living my best life. I got a chance to interact with the locals as well as meet dope throwers from around the USA. We bonded quick, but I must say I was disappointed in the coaches for throwing. They weren’t much help, and the rings were a bit slick to my liking for shot put. Since my ankle was healed, I still didn’t want to jeopardize college, so I once again played it extremely safe. There were people who used the same technique as me and they were slipping and falling out of the ring. That was a big no go for me, so I transitioned back to the glide technique. Now it was just a waiting game. Throughout the week they took us to a lot of different places where I was able to exchange my money to Australian currency. I bought boomerangs, Tim Tams and of course my very own custom Team USA jacket. I also bought one for my mother. This would be the first jacket that I gained in hopes of one day being able to wear it again when I make the big leagues for Team USA. My favorite part of exploring Australia was at the sanctuary. I took a plethora of photos with the kangaroos, crocodiles, emu, birds, Tasmania devils, koala bears, and many more. While I was with the kangaroos, I found Jack and I was just the funniest experience I had had.

As the day arrived for competition, I was geeked to go against New Whales. I was a bit surprised that the competition wasn’t as diverse with different teams for throwing but it was still dope. Since I was utilizing a different technique, I fell short in securing the gold to New South Whales, but I was surely going to take up for that in discus. The very next day it was a bit warmer than the previous days there so there was a bit of an advantage to my success. I put my game face on and was not excepting anything less than Gold. Once the competition began, I realized that discus was not as popular for any of the girls, so it was an easy win. This win was my token win for my 12th place at the state meet but to had gained a first and second place medal internationally was all that mattered. I was ready to finish my time in Australia and head to our vacation destination in Honolulu, Hawaii.

 The plane ride to Hawaii was quite different from what we had experienced going to Australia. We were on a bigger plane at first but when we transitioned, we were on a very small plane. It was cramped. I guess we were compensated by having delicious food. When we arrived, I was ready to celebrate! Our guides gave us an itinerary with slots open for adventures that we would have wanted to go on. Originally, I chose mountain hiking, sky diving and scuba diving but mama was not for me sky diving in Hawaii. So, I decided to go parasailing, mountain hiking, and scuba diving. My first adventure was mountain hiking. I forgot that the weather would be snowy at the top, so I did not dress for the occasion. But I made it to the top and down like a true hiker. I was so cold, but the experience kept my adrenaline going. I saw so much I can’t even begin to explain how nature wins every time. Next up was parasailing. I was sooo nervous about being in the air. I was calm on the boat out in the ocean, but this was a new level of what I was used to. Once it was time for my group strap in, we all held hand as the instructor counted down. I was surprised that I kept my eyes open the entire time. After we were all the way in the air it was a different type of peace. Peace that I didn’t even know existed. I had been missing out of what the rest of the world had to offer because my view though my family did travel was mostly the hood. I wanted to see and do more. Most importantly I wanted to be more. I believe that same day after we were done with our activities, the group I hung with wanted to walk down to the beach. We were only about a 5-minute walk away, so I was ready to go. On the way, I expressed to them that I didn’t know how to swim but they all said if I wanted to go out, they would help me. I guess I felt like I was invincible to go out to the ocean with people who don’t look like me and trust them if something were to go wrong to save me. The “But did you die?” moment. However, nothing bad happened and I was able to stay afloat myself with doggy paddling. I was content but also knew my boundaries within the water. They had my back just in case and for that I will always remember. The day ended lovely.

The next day of activities was scuba diving. I was excited to see all the fish, coral, turtles and just anything that was in the sea. After I put on my gear, our instructor gave us our lessons and let us roam freely. There were so many vibrant fish and things that I’ve never seen before. Being under the water, to myself, felt as if the world had stood steal and I was in tune with all the aquatic animals. They were surrounding me, and it was awesome until I scraped my knee on the reefs. I was like, “Okay my time has concluded in the water.” I didn’t want my blood just leaking so I laid out of the beach carving all my family members names in the sand and taking pictures for the memories to share back home. I did not want my vacation to end but I knew I only had two more days to enjoy Hawaii. Those two days were filled with Polynesian food and really understanding the culture. My favorite was the purple rolls and different meats. I remember braiding together some type of plant to whereas a crown on my head. We also went to a show where we were served all kinds of food and was able to see different kinds of performances. The best ones were always the ones that involved fire and tricks. Now it was time to come back home and get ready for my going away party and new life as a college kid.

Going Away Party

The day was set to gather with family and enjoy time spent at my going away party. It was just as I could have imagined. All my loved ones in one area rooting for me like no other. My village was strong, and their love and support kept me going on a daily. As the night progressed, we had eaten our food. It was time for speeches. Whoever wanted to share insight into college, speak words of encouragement or just share memories had the floor to do so. I told myself that I wasn’t going to get emotional but there was always one person who could break me at any moment. My great granny raised her hand to let me know she had something to say. As soon as she started, I kid y’all I couldn’t hold back any of my tears. Her words held power and her mark in my life was evident. I just knew she was going to be able to witness me graduate high college. The journey was about to begin because if no one else was proud of me, I knew damn well my great granny was proud of me.

After the speeches, it was time to go through the gifts and thank everyone for supporting me in all my endeavors thus far. The time had come, and I was about to make a name for myself on an even higher level both academically and athletically. I was ready for the networking, the independence, a new set of college friends and most of all creating memories that would mold me into who I wanted to become in life. It was like I could be anybody though I didn’t have a set major that I would have desired or felt like I was passionate about. So, since I knew the first two years were general courses, I had time to figure it out. The focus right now was simply enjoying it all. Every single moment that was going to come my way.

A couple days before it was time to head off to college, I was suddenly awoken by yelling outside of my window. I looked out to see that it was my uncle and his wife arguing and suddenly, I heard three loud hits and her screaming. I was mortified and I knew that whatever was happening was because he was under the influence. I immediately put clothes on, ran to my mother’s room and told her what was happening. She jumped up out her sleep and I went to grab the bat just in case he was out of it. As I opened the door to the backyard, I could see them going at it and he was passing strong licks. I was not in a good headspace because men beating on women is a trigger for me. I was so upset with him that I was banging the bat on the steps so hard, I’m surprised that I didn’t create a hole. My mother could feel my energy and she wouldn’t let me get close to the situation. She grabbed the bat from me and told me that there was no reason for me to be involved in that type of situation because I had school to get to. She then nudged the bat into his chest, and he didn’t react. She did it again and I assumed that it hurt because then he released his wife and went walking down the street because his intentions were to come back to cause harm. After that, the police were involved, and he endured some rough times while he was away that caused him to realize that with his sickness of alcoholism deteriorating his body, he would never want to be in possession of the police. It took me a little while to adjust from that, but I was still ready to head to school and I still loved my uncle dearly.

College

First semester of college! I remember as if it was yesterday. We were on the road heading down to my college. I felt special to have made it to high college. Great granny would always talk to me about high college. When we arrived, it was so surreal. I was finally going to be on my own, enjoying the adventures of college life and being a student-athlete. We went to all the meetings we were to attend upon arriving. After that we were given the keys to my room along with other information that an incoming freshman would need. We made our way to the dorms. Everyone who helped move my belongings to my room were extremely helpful. Once everything was settled my roommate, whom I chose because we competed against each other in high school was there. Her family liked me and wanted to make sure their child stayed on the right track. They told me that I would be a great influence on her, and I had no problem doing so. After that, I was reunited with my own family, and we enjoyed our final moments until they would come back again in a month for family and friends’ weekend. When they left, a part of me did not want them to go but the rest of me was ready to make moves on my own.

All the time we spent before classes started were filled with doing campus activities and getting familiar with where my classes were beforehand so I would not get lost or be late for the first day. I met some cool people the first few days but only a handful were around me vise-versa throughout the entire year. I was always around my roommate if you saw her, you saw me, it was almost as if we were inseparable. The night before classes, I was so eager that I did not get much sleep. The next day I was ready to make my way to classes. Everything was great. The teachers were cool, and the work was not hard at all. They did not give busy work. A lot of the time we did not have homework. Since my major at the time was Sport Management, half the classes I had involved sports. The other classes were simple classes like English, History, Oral Communications, and Micro-Applications. At this time, I had two English classes because over the summer I was supposed to write a timed essay online and my brain doesn’t like working in the summer, so I blew it. Once I was in both English classes I had to message my mother as soon as I walked into the first one because the question on the board was, “What is a paragraph?” I messaged her that I was in special education because there were only nine chairs in there all against the wall. I did not try to fight and get out of the class because then I would have to find another class to have my 12 hours for eligibility. My teacher thought it was funny because he knew the skills I had for writing.

Once everything was in order and I had a routine with my classes. It was time for track to get started. We had a team meeting and almost everyone who was on the team was there. I met with all the throwers, and they explained to us that everyone’s school schedule is different so throughout the entire season you will not see the entire team until we have a meet. That was not bad at all considering we had a small weight room that we used so, rotating schedules were the best. Once the throwers were all acquainted, pretty much anything I did was with them. I was close to the senior thrower. She was like a role model, but I also wanted to out throw her. I wanted to challenge her so that she would produce even more in her last years of being at the college as well as challenge myself to dig deep within and produce more than I have ever done in my career. Around the second and third weeks of practice I noticed a huge increase in my weights. I asked coach, “Why am I lifting so heavy because I never lifted these numbers ever?” He literally told me that since he saw me in high school when he came to visit, and I was squatting 385 pounds that he knew I had it in me to do his workout. The rest of the girls looked at my workout plan and told me, “Good Luck!” I then asked to see their weight workout and there was no comparison. They had little workout plans but, that made me realize what he sees in me. I need to do that workout and not say a word. Surprisingly, I did those workouts and after every practice that I finished; I knew I was going to dominate in the season. I was lifting so much that I earned new nicknames after the senior thrower’s top male and female. They called me little Drew and little Katrina. That meant a lot to me to be able to gain that type of recognition as a freshman.

A couple weeks later, we had a sports banquet where everyone received their letterman jackets. We were invited to attend to support the team as well as see what we could achieve. I told myself that night that I was going to be on that stage next year receiving my jacket. I was determined to make my mark at that college no matter what. Once both school and track became my daily routine, there was not a worry in sight. Coach told me that he wanted me to eat, drink chocolate milk, lift weights, repeat, and that’s exactly what I did. It showed tremendously. A month later of hard work and dedication, it was time to reunite with my family. Once they told me they were outside, I rushed down to get to them. When they saw me, I was huge! They said that I was solid and cocky. They could not believe how much I had changed in only one month. When I first got to school, I’d bought a lot of clothes to have for college. I told them that I could not fit none of the clothes that we had bought. They explained that they could see why. I even felt heavy but that’s a part of the program. We laughed about it the whole time and I told them that coach said that I should eat, drink milk, and lift weights.

It was different coming from a high school were our everyday workouts included a mile run and we also had meets where we had a throwers relay. We were in tip top shape. Also, with me being fast as I was, I was always in the clear for being an alternate on a relay. Running was the first thing I wanted to do when I was introduced to track and field. Until this day, I believe it was either because of jealousy of who I was related to, or, because I was a fat kid back then, but all things happen for a reason. Now that I think back, even in middle school when I wanted to run, they said that I would be better at being a thrower because of my body make up. I ran a few races and did well but ultimately, they knew I was a thrower, so I left it alone. It’s funny how my events were picked out for me but in high school I had all around potential to explore different things. I remember at one meet I was told that I needed to do the pentathlon because I had potential to be even better than the real deal champ of my city in Track and Field. I guess that’s why I strive so hard in my throwing events to prove that I will be great in anything that I come encounter with.

But, back to the family weekend, we went to an art place near the school and got pictures of us placed on wood blocks in remembrance of the trip. Later that night we went to a restaurant that had some great food. I told myself that anytime I am in that area I would always make my way there near the river. I ended up staying with them in the hotel room because the next day we were going to go to the carnival. My mom and I rode a few rides and had a really good time. They even had monster trucks there, which are my favorite. The next day was the football game. I was able to show my family the thrower who I really had a crush on since I met him. Jack was a split image of what I liked but, I knew we were probably never going to make it close to a relationship, but we all have those types of crushes. Once the game was in session everything was good, and my school won. I really thought they were going to lose because of how bad everyone talked about the team. However, this was the last night I had with my family, and I wasn’t going to see them again for three months when the first meet was going to take place.

After they left, it was time to get back to business with school and track. I was so determined not to have work in at least two classes that the ones that had all the work open for the entire semester, I just hit it hard for a span of two weeks. I was constantly in the lab late getting all their work done so I could have peace for the remainder of the semester. My roommate would come into the lab to do her assignments for the day or week. She would see that I was still working even after she was done so she asked me what I was working on. After I told her that I was completing all the work for the semester she said that she did not see how I was doing it. She was just going to wait until it was close to being due. I knew that if I got it done ahead of time that I would train myself to never procrastinate. My planner was never empty including weekend spots. I was always doing something but never doing too much where I wasn’t getting enough rest or not enjoying myself. I just felt like if I take two weeks out to get it done, I’ll be able to enjoy the entire semester with little to no work. Once I was finally complete with all the work, that’s exactly how my first semester of college was. I slept as much as I could. Went to class occasionally because since I was done with the work my teachers really did not need me there all the time. They would even say if you already did a certain assignment that it was not needed to attend class. Life was great at this moment, all I really had to focus on was throwing and getting ready for the meets.

Workouts began to get easier even with the increased weight and different workouts. My throws were consistent and since indoor season is shot put and weight, it was not hard for me to pick up the technique for weight throw. Soon I was working that almost as good as shot put. Since high school my personal bests were without knowing the proper technique, I was not concerned with my numbers dropping learning the correct technique. I would say that the hardest part of the transition from high school to college just with throwing and weightlifting would be that I literally had to learn the proper ways of a spin, how to squat correctly, and bench correctly. Once I finally made those changes everything became easier and a little more comfortable on my old injuries.

During the time around October, I decided to talk heavily to a Nigerian I had met back in 2011. I was no longer with my high school sweetheart because she had issues with the distance and decided to let me go. He was always checking on me through the years and told me that one day he would be with me. I finally decided to give him a chance after hearing him out about why he was still interested after four years had gone by. I thought to myself that maybe, just maybe this is the track athlete of my dreams. Once he answered all the questions, I finally agreed to date. Only thing is, he still lived in Nigeria. So, the next big question was. “Could I do another long-distance relationship?” I had to remind myself though I’ve dated another who I had never seen in person just online from the states and we were strong for that period so why not give it a go. He was extremely good to me. He did not complain about anything. We shared workout plans. He made sure I was on top of my work. He asked how my family was doing and if I had checked on them daily. He was also rooting for me since we both shared a passion for track and field. It was great for the next couple months until somehow, I started to feel as if he was just too soft for me. Anything I said to him, he would take it to heart and send crying faces and be upset and hurt. I wanted him to realize that I was a college student-athlete and with the time difference I could not talk to him all night because my focus was getting my work done. He would constantly ask if I was done, and he had become bothersome. I continued to date him though because I believed that he had good intentions and maybe this was just like when a person truly dates, who they have been waiting for, they don’t want to let them go situations. We were good, but I let it get to me probably more than I should have. So, to secure my thoughts and have good faith on the relationship, I constantly reached out to God to see if it was for me.

Letter to God for Nalo Nov 7, 2015

Prayer Request 6:04am

Dear Lord,

I ask that you forgive me for all the wrong I have done. I ask you to ease my mind and open my heart. Heal my spirit, mind, and body. You have opened so many doors that I have wondered into. I know that it has been a long time since I have listened to you, but I have never stopped loving you. I know at some point I almost lost sight of the path that you had for me, but I am back. I am ready to show you that I am listening. I am ready for the next task you have in place for me. I know those four years have consequences. If what is going on now is my punishment, I am okay with it. I will always continue to stay humble and keep you first. I won’t be introduced back into that life that I once lived. You have opened another door for me with Nalo. He is everything that I could ever ask for and I just hope and pray to you that everything is well. If this is your plan, your will, then this is my blessing. Someone who can keep me on the right track and keep me totally focused. He can teach me how to do all things that will prepare me for our last days and keep me humble. I pray that he will make it here this year Dec. 18th. That he will be on a plane with you by his side traveling to me. I pray that no one can even attempt to persuade us to turn against one another. I pray that outsiders are not allowed. I pray that all documents are correct and that his brother can produce money to help him get here. I pray that we continue to stay in tune with one another for forever. We will continue to serve you. You are the one and only one who has the say and power to do it all. I pray for both of our families that all is well, and harm is far from both. I pray that soon all will be well within my body that my blood pressure will be under control and my hands will be healed in the name of Jesus. That all my symptoms will vanish, no surgery will be needed. I pray that I will be healthy and no matter what, I keep a sound mind. I will never forget that everything is from you that there’s no need to question why. You know of it all before it even takes place. You also know when it will end. I know that you always have a plan in place for me and I am in for the long run. I will never give up or abuse the gifts that you have given to me. I will always continue to thank you in advance for what you have done, are doing right now, and will do for me. You are my number one Almighty God. I love you always, no matter what happens. I know that you will always have my back! You know what is on my heart and what runs through my mind. I love you so much, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

We were approaching our first meet, since I was working as hard as I was, a lot of things came together for the first time with my throws in both events. I was ready for competition. We received everything that we needed as far as clothes, bags, and any athletic wear we would need. I had all my clothes prepped the night of the meet. I was so ready to dominate. That morning I took pictures and posted them to my social media about the big day. I did not look to see what people were saying because now it was time to get my mind in place for competition. Once we arrived at competition, I could feel that I was nervous being my first college meet. We had a little wait before it was time for competition. Most of the time before competition I was with my mom and granny trying to keep my mind at ease. Once it was time, I became more nervous because I knew that I needed to get good marks on my first throw in Weight. I was on deck; I could feel my palms starting to sweat. Then I was in the hole, and I was a little jittery. Now the time has come, and I was up to throw. I set myself up in the back of the ring, I took a deep breath and began my throw. To my surprise it was a good throw, and the burden was now off my shoulders to just try to beat myself and not anyone else considering being new to the event. Once the event was over, I received 7th place. Not bad at all for my first meet so I went into shot put comfortable and confident. I threw consistently. I was right in the ballpark. I was surprised that I placed 3rd in my dominant event considering I was going against people who had been in college longer than I have. After the meet, mom and granny went their way to get back home and we headed back to campus. Only thing left was to take finals which I was not worried about at all. I went through those days with ease and was waiting on mom to pick me up for Winter break.

After being home for a couple days, my Nigerian lover was constantly getting on my nerves. So, I ended up breaking it off with him. While I was home my first love Thomas came back in the picture heavy. So, I gave him basically my whole Christmas break. I guess I thought that one day he would act right, and we could finish what we started when I was 13. Of course, once it got close to leaving back out for school it ended. It never lasted long because he always thought he was right, he did not want to listen, but I figured no one had ever made me feel as he did on and off through the years, so any chance I had, I tried to make something work. Once I arrived back to campus. Only athletes were there because we had a meet mid-January 2016. It was creepy being the only one on the floor. I could now hear every pipe creak, pin drop, and whatever else that usually happens when all the rooms are filled. The water was tricky as well. I had to be careful with the hot water since I was literally the only one in the dorms taking a shower at times.

A few days later it was time again to suit up for a meet. I was ready for the competition since I kicked off my first meet in a great seating for weight and shot. Since this meet was close to home, mom, granny, and my aunt came to support. As we were sitting, waiting on my flight in weight, one of my teammates who had a foul odor was constantly moving back and forth in front of us. My family looked at me like, “What is that?” I had to explain to them that he did not take care of his personal hygiene. It was so bad that a lot of the times he would sniff around thinking people around him were foul, but he was merely smelling his own funk. A while later it was time for the weight throw. I was so confident that I threw a personal best. I now went from last meet being in 7th place to being in 3rd place. After weight my flight in shot put did not start until the meet was almost over. I was not accustomed to throwing at night, nor starting an event at the end of the meet. I felt tired, but I pushed through. I was seated in first going into the finals. I was not letting anyone get ahead of me. One by one after the girls threw their final throws, they began to leave. Once it was time for me to throw my final throws no one was really in the field house. All the teams were packed and waiting on the bus for the last of the throwers to join them. For my final throw it was just the scorer, coach, a few teammates, and my family watching. It really wasn’t to many people besides that. Maybe a few other people who were still there. I was able to hold down my first-place throw to win my first college meet.

Life was just becoming the light of everything. Of course, this wasn’t my first college party since I’ve been at the school but now, I had something to celebrate while consuming alcohol. For this track party, I had just won my first college meet. The party began. I was raised before I left to understand where my tolerance was when it came to drinking alcohol. So, I was knowledgeable of when to stop or slow down. This time was extremely different. I felt absolutely nothing. We had taken shots, finished a bottle, and drunk punch. I still didn’t feel like I had drunken anything. I decided to stop. We even did the straight-line test, and I was completely fine. I just sat down and had bottles of water, so I thought, until I woke up in the hospital. All I remember throughout the time before I got to the hospital was being able to tell my teammates to take me to the hospital. I assumed that conversation took place after they had gotten me in bed. At that moment my eyes were not open as I repeatedly told them to take me. Everything that I remembered did indeed happen the way I explained it. I was drinking water because I was done with the night but, at the point of me being done had already been too much. It was called a delayed reaction which I had never experienced.

 In remembrance of drinking water to hydrate from alcohol consumption, I was told that I was touchy that night towards my teammates. Everybody was drunk so no one actually paid attention enough to care. That night would have been considered your typical college party, right? I was told that once the night was concluding I was heavily intoxicated. I was able to help them get me back into the dorm room. I still can’t remember any of that. My roommate was also super drunk that she was running around, and they had to catch her multiple times. At the point of placing me into my bed I remember being conscious only for a very short period. God granted me enough energy to speak to my teammates. I could not open my eyes, but I remember repeating multiple times to them that I needed to go to the hospital. The first time their response was that they were just going to let me sleep it off. I couldn’t hear their conversation thereafter, but I continued to repeat, Take me to the hospital.” I then slipped back into being unconscious. My teammates told me that they got the message and after I said it the third time before I was out cold that they called the ambulance. My college brother who played football was the one who carried me from the third floor of the dorms down to where the EMTs could receive me. When I woke up in the hospital, the crisis counselor was sitting by my bed explaining to me what happened. She said that my alcohol concentration never stopped spiking even while I was in the ambulance. I had suffered from alcohol poisoning. She had already called my mother, but she didn’t answer so she left a message. She then insisted that I also call my mother. Once my mother answered it was a deep and emotional phone call considering that prior to I was moments away from death. She was so hurt and upset. I had to explain to her that something was wrong because though I was trained before college to know my limits of alcohol consumption, for this instance my max or feeling never came until it was too late. If I could explain where I was, from the time after my body went cold, it an out of body experience. I was standing in a dark room with nothing in sight but darkness. It was like I was waiting for my turn to speak with the Big Guy, but the assistant came instead to point back away from the entrance. Out of the darkness was a heaven like arm and hand in white surrounded by light pointing behind me. Though in silence it was clear that I needed to turn around and leave. It was not my time to enter the gates. My very first encounter with the afterlife and if I ever had any doubts, I sure didn’t after that moment.

 I was later released and picked up from the hospital by Jack. Once we arrived back to the dorms, I was met by Makenzie where they helped me to get into my pajamas and left sticky notes all around the room to contact them when I woke up. After I was up, I finally looked at my release forms and I had to get my stomach pumped. But nothing suggested that. I didn’t have a sore throat. I wasn’t in any pain or discomfort. I felt good but a bit dizzy as if I had a hangover. But overall, great to the point that I went downstairs to the lab to work on homework. The assignment was a paper that I had to do research on. I ended up receiving an A on it. I had to tell coach what happened before anyone else could, so I sent him a message. I gave him all the details and he had to discuss it with the board. They gave him the option to choose my punishment. Since getting my stomach pumped sounds bad, that was my harsh punishment. The punishment I had for school was community service and a course on alcohol. The course wasn’t hard because I know the basics on it. The community service that I had was to help maintenance on their daily routes. After I met the women workers, they could tell just by looking at me that I was a good kid, and this was one of those first-time things that happened. So, my community service ended up being engaging talks about life which included laughter and enjoyment. I never touched a trashcan or bag the entire time. Once I was done with my hours, it was back to school and track with also being given the new nickname of “TOXIC” for as high as my concentration was.

A couple weeks after that I started to feel weird. My emotions were up and down. I had insomnia. I started to get angered by the slightest incident with no prior knowledge as to why the incident would have bothered me so much. I talked to my mother to explain to her what was going on and we decided that I should talk to the counselors to figure it out. After my first 2 or 3 sessions I was able to talk to the psychiatrists to get on medicine to help. The first few bottles were low dosages. I was scheduled to come back the following week to see if there was a change. To everyone’s surprise there was no change. So, my dosages began to increase and change every week thereafter. Putting me through a lot to maintain balance between school, practice, and dosages that are supposed to knock me on my ass. However, some did but at the point of if I had an anger episode or emotional outburst my body would burn the medicine so quick it was as if I never took the medicine in the first place. At this point in time, things began to seem not so promising as far as my career, my thought process, what I desired in life, or now if I cared if I killed someone or not. I had been diagnosed with Anxiety, Blackout Anger, Depression, Homicidal Ideation, Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and my body would mimic other disorders such as Bipolar, Schizophrenia, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and slight signs of a Personality Disorder.

Throughout the course of my time at my dream school, there were several incidents that occurred. I was now on watch to make sure that I wasn’t going to harm any of the students around me. I wanted to make sure that my teammates knew everything that was going on so they wouldn’t be a part of my new-found madness, but it was hard for that not to happen. My therapist told me that I needed to write down every incident and explain exactly what was happening. So, I did.

The Legendary Black Book

Sylvester Cane was his name. He was my teammate. This was his first offense. It was mid indoor season, and we were at practice. Anyone could have got in the ring, but no one was moving fast enough so I just went. He rolled his eyes at me once I entered the ring, and I had a bad throw. His comment was, “I got cut in front of for that?” This comment flipped a switch in my brain. After he threw my comment back to him was, "What was that bullshit?" Once I said that my anger began to increase as I was trying to let it go. I finally began to get a grip of my anger and finished up practice as any other day. After practice everything was good. I went to dinner with some of my teammates. Then I went to finish up some homework in the lab. When I finished, it was time to go up to my room and take a shower. Things began to show a deeper reality of what has been going on inside my mind unknowingly. As I began to shower, I was impeded with images of killing Sylvester. They were extremely violent and detailed. His death played in front of me as if I was watching someone else murder him, but it was me. It was slow and painful right on campus. The images of his body began to replay repeatedly in my head but more in depth. I found myself then planning my escape. I was mapping out the campus trying to find places where I could hide and not get caught. Before I knew it, I had spaced out in the shower for almost an hour. After I realized what was happening, I hurried to get back to my room to message my mother and tell her what was going on. As I was texting her, I became even angrier and realized that I had stopped breathing in the mist of sending her the message explaining what happened. The entire night, because of my anger, my body was on fire, and I could not sleep. It was as if Hell was upon me, and I wasn’t just satisfied with visions.

(March 24) Jack Moore

Jack Moore was my favorite teammate. We did almost everything together. So, for my anger to get out of hand with him was strange. It was a different type of anger because he did nothing to provoke me. We were riding in the van headed to the hotel for a track meet. As we arrived at a gas station for a restroom break everything was relatively normal. When I got back into the van, I was trying to go back to sleep. I did not notice I was getting angry until I tuned into pain in my jaws because I was biting down extremely hard with my teeth. I remember trying to think of other things to calm myself down. While my eyes were closed the first voice I heard, was Jack’s. Immediately after, there were graphic images of me sneaking up behind him, wrestling him down to the ground, and repeatedly hitting him in the face. I watched him slowly get up and I body slammed him on the ground. I watched him die a slow death as if I was playing violent video games. The voice I heard at the end of the rounds said, “FINISH HIM!” Somehow, I managed to come out of the deep dark abyss that my mind had created but that also resulted in staying up the remainder of the time.

(March 28th) Makenzie Godfry

Makenzie Godfry was a cool, down to earth teammate but she had her own issues that were sometimes a hand full to deal with. This was also her first offense. This specific incident took place on my birthday. At this point everyone who has ever been around me knew that I was having anger issues and they also knew how severe it had become. We’d discussed situations where I had become outraged and moments that I know will irritate me to the point of blackout anger. We were all in the common area socializing when another one of our friends decided to join us. I was cleaning up from a project I was doing so she could have somewhere to sit. The project included paper balls that she then decided to throw at me. The first one did not bother me because it did not touch me. She then threw the second paper ball and it hit me right in my nose. This created an even stronger anger than the previous incidents that I had. It was like she had turned on the darkest switch within me. My breathing had become heavy. My facial expressions had changed.

I began to fight back in forth with myself to stop from causing severe harm. This caused me to have an intense headache for about 20 minutes. But, in the very moment of time passing from being hit with the paper ball, I had no control of commanding myself to speak. I could not tell her to stop because I was no longer physically there. I felt as if I was trapped inside of my own body only being able to see but not able to control any of my actions. I was in a blank stare and was seconds from not being able to turn that switch off. I believe maybe three to five minutes had gone by before I was finally able to move. I instantly turned on a crossword puzzle on my phone to distract myself. I kept track of how long it took me to finish a crossword puzzle. Extreme anger I would finish in 30 to 47 seconds. If I was just bothered, I would finish in 48 to 59 seconds but if I was more relaxed yet concentrated on thinking, I would be on a puzzle for more than two minutes. In this situation I finished the puzzle in 57 seconds, so I knew that I was calming down, but I also realized that with the type of anger I have, it was now difficult to control my actions or in this case turn off that switch. Eventually when I was calm enough, I got the chance to explain to her what was happening. She apologized.

After that everything my roommate/teammate Macy did would drive me crazy. She had multiple alarms to wake her up, but she would sleep through them all. By doing so, I would have to get out of my bed to wake her up so she can turn them off. Yelling for her to turn them off was a lost cause. If she brought food in the room, I would put my earphones in because her chewing bothered me. I am also not a morning person. Majority of the time, I do not want to be spoken to or touched. As soon as I wake up, she was talking to me about things I could probably care less about. After class, I would want to go to sleep, and she would want to talk like it was something important. I believe what bothered me most was her motivation in Track and Field. It was like it was non-existent. I felt as if athletes who have a full-ride scholarship should do their work-out and grow like they have a full-ride. She doubted herself every day and it showed to the point where nobody even cared about her throws. I mean she did not seem to want to be better so why should we continue to motivate her. If she does not take in what is being given to her then why bother. She was naturally loud which had become annoying. I grew up an only child so having to deal with someone else and sharing a room was horrible. It was like there was no respect. She would be on the phone late at night on a school night like she was in her own room. She acted as if her voice was soft and did not carry.

Her side of the room would be extremely messy to where her mess would travel to my side. I have tripped over her shoes from time to time to where I would get so tired and angry, I would throw her belongings in her closet. In the night, she would constantly moan in her sleep, and I would always wake up. When I have finally fallen into a deep sleep for a while, here comes her many alarms. After she turns off her alarms, while she is getting ready, she would constantly grunt for no apparent reason. I was so over her that when I went home for break her texting me would piss me off. I would wait until after she gets ready, to put my clothes on, so we would not be in each-others way. From my point of view that’s the best way to prepare yourself for a day so no one is in the others way. But that was not the case. Somehow every time she would want to get ready if would be at the same time as me. It was little space in the room for two big throwers to get ready at the same time. No matter if I tried to get up first or wait until the very last minute to dress, it was like she was on a mission to dress when I wanted to dress. Another thing that bothered me was, we stayed in the back of the hall and the lounge was in the front. It was a good distance so, when the hall was quiet, I would hear her laugh. I was instantly annoyed all over again. It was like she never left the room. She would also wake me up for events that I wasn’t interested in. I felt like I have the same access that you have in knowing about the events that were going on campus that day. If I am sleep, that means I am not going or care to go. Lastly, there had been a couple of incidents where we all had plans to go with friends and she knew that I was going. She would lie to them saying that I said I wasn’t going. I would be fully dressed prepared to have a good night to find out they had all gone without me.

Patricia Stanley

She was the sweetest teammate that I’ve ever met. This incident involved her and Macy. Around this time, we were getting ready for the indoor championships. Coach John purchased me a small personal shot put because I had small hands. For some reason everyone forgot to bring their own shot. They then wanted to borrow mine. This began to bother me because I felt like they should have been more responsible. This was a big meet, and they did not have what they needed for championships. They also knew that I did not like sharing my own personal implements. The reason being it would interrupt the time I had to warm up before competition.

After indoor season was our first outdoor meet. Before we left for this meet, I asked everyone did they have what they needed. In fear of a repeat of what happened in indoor, they said everything was all in the van. Once we arrived in Arkansas for the meet, it was time for Discus. Suddenly, Patricia came to me to tell me that she did not bring her implements. She thought it was not a big deal because she could use mine. Remind you all that my discus is very old. They were from when I competed in high school and Lord knows how long they had been using them. I was very cautious with my implements. I tried to keep calm and let her borrow them. As I am watching her prepare to throw, she takes two of my implements into the ring. She throws one on the concrete outside the ring as if they were her own. I was furious at this moment, so I watched her throw. She ended up throwing it out of bounds. It would have not been a problem but, it rolled and crashed into the metal siding. Once she came back with the discus the middle of my favorite discus was out. I wanted to punch her in the face. It was bothering me even more that she was a junior and not prepared with her own implements for a college meet. This was the main reason why I did not share my own personal implements with anyone not even in practice.

March 31st

I remember that I was doing laundry. I told myself before I went down to the laundry room that if anything were to happen to stay calm. I don’t know why I had to tell myself this, but I just had a feeling. As I was walking down the stairs, I was laughing to myself saying, “Why would anything appear to be wrong? You are doing laundry.” As I turned the corner into the laundry room, I noticed that my dryer was wide open. I looked down and half of my clothes were on the floor. It had not been long that it had been tampered with because the inside of the dryer was still hot. I then looked around and the first person who looked me dead in my eyes was in the cooking area. I am sure that my facial expression made her afraid by the way her facial expression changed. In the mist of that moment, she was the one who looked at me in my eyes. I assumed that she was the one who did it in the first place. Suddenly, images of killing her began to play in front of me. I hurried up and put my clothes back in the dryer and slammed the door. I knew I did not have much time before I would act on what I saw so I ran back up to my dorm room. The further I was away from the laundry room, the redness in my face began to lift and the heat that was coming off my body began to cool down.

April 2nd

This day was supposed to be great. It was the first outdoor home meet. I was kind of upset that discus was before shot put. Throwing that event before shot-putting causes complications with how much power I can produce out of my arm. During discus I ended up causing harm to my arm, but I continued until I could not do so anymore. I scratched the remainder of my throws and went off to the side to talk to my mother. She already knew that I was in pain, but she thought it would be funny to take pictures of the face I was making while enduring that type of pain. In that moment I knew that my facial expression had changed and there was dead silence amongst us. The good thing about this moment was that there were no signs of the homicidal ideation towards my mother. Even though I still had the black-out anger episode. No images were present.

April 4th

After a while I would have small episodes throughout the day. No one was safe. I remember it was a good day. I was in the English building and after class, I was going down the steps to head to the restroom. There was a white girl who was coming up the stairs at the same time. She was walking in the middle of the staircase. It was as if she did not care that I was walking down the stairs. I had to remember that a lot of the students there were raised to be racist. I only know because in one of our psychology classes that was a question that 98% of the white kids who raised their hands confessed to. So, she proceeded to walk up the stairs as if I was to move out of her way. I was a bit irritated because of the split seconds of watching her walk in the middle and with her being that close to me I was glad that I hurried to get as close to the railing as possible. I did not want it to be the slightest instance of where she could had touched, brushed, or bumped me. The situation all together did however trigger the homicidal ideation as if she had touched me. There were vivid images of me kicking her down the stairs. After she passed, I hurried into the bathroom where I could cool down. I had a long day ahead of me so, I had to reconstruct my brain to prepared for the rest of my day.

The next incident happened right before spring break. I was attending my English class and somehow the discussion of Black Lives Matter (BLM) came about. I was already irritated at the fact that 95% of the class were white. The remaining students were of another ethnicity, and I was literally the only black person. There was one girl who ultimately did not know the purpose of BLM or what they stood for. So, at the time, I did not want to share my views on the matter because I did not feel in the best of moods about the discussion, nor did I have anybody else who was black to back me up. My professor called me out on the matter, and I thought he was in the wrong. I did not volunteer so don’t purposely put me in a position to discuss it. Of course, he was white himself. We had already bumped heads when the school year began due to his commentary of the city that I grew up in. He’d never visited the city and there was only one other student from my city who has probably ever attended the school so, they did not have a reason to discuss it.

As I began to express my opinion, the girl who did not understand the point of BLK decided to look me dead in my eyes as if everything I was about to say was “bullshit.” I felt so uncomfortable that after I spoke, one of my classmates who was mixed decided to sum up what I was saying to conclude the discussion. After class I began to follow her down to the lower levels of the English department. I was furiously going back and forth with myself if I should continue to follow her or go my own way. There was a split second where I really wanted to follow her and show her why BLM exists. She was uneducated and blind to reality. I just wanted to finish what she tried to start. My version of a finished conversation included what slavery was for black people in reverse. But at the very last minute of walking down to the basement level where she was headed, my body turned away towards the door. The separation of my body was crazy. Everything from my waist up was facing her direction and waist down was walking out the door. As bad as I wanted to do what I was thinking, I did not fight the separation between my mind and my body.

On this day of April 4th was Nalo’s Birthday and I had another prayer that I wanted to get off my chest. He was still consistent in making sure I was okay, so I leaned heavy on him throughout my time of battling with reality. But my prayers were so deep about being gay that I was crashing hard for men so fast that I don’t even know why I was praying for those things.

Dear Lord,

Please grant me forgiveness for all I have done and forgive me for not trusting in you. I have been listening to my flesh instead of listening to the words that you spoke. Right now, I am listening, and I am ready to be on the track that you have set for me. I know sometimes I may wonder off into what the world is offering but deep down I know that you have placed Nalo in my life to be my husband and I want him to be the man of my dreams. I want to marry and reproduce. We will base our marriage off your word. You are the only one and will forever be my Lord and Savior. I will always love you no matter what or who may think otherwise. There is NO other LORD!

April 11th Macy Black

Seems that no matter what, my roommate has become a trigger of my anger. Honestly, I was becoming accustomed to eating lunch with my other teammates for the fact that living with Macy alone was bothering me for no reason. On this day as I was eating lunch, she decided to join. Once she sat down, I thought that everything was going to be fine. Then suddenly, her presence became annoying. She hadn’t said a word. She wasn’t loud. Images of me smashing her head into her plate of nachos repeatedly threw me off. I thought I was fine with her being there, but I guess the buildup of offences and OCD played a big role in my emotions and actions.

April 13th

This was the first time I had dreamt in a while. I certainly wasn’t expecting it to be violent or emotional. In the dream the settings took place in the middle school I used to attend. It was the first day back of my eighth-grade year. After school was out, I went to visit my old teachers on the 6th grade hallway. I passed by Ms. Knowles as she was walking out of her office, and I spoke to her. Everything I said to her was with respect and suddenly, she started yelling at me. She was telling me that she was tired of seeing me on that hall and that I needed to go home. She also said that I was getting on her nerves. She proceeded to walk down the hall and I followed her. We continued to argue, and I threatened to kill her if she did not leave me alone. Then I pushed her. While I was walking down the hall, I was squeezing two stress balls in one hand. I told Mr. Boston what happened, and he laughed. Ms. Jackson then called for me over the intercom. I said that I was not going. I was going to go home! “Fuck her.” The dream immediately jumped to her calling my grandmother. I do not know exactly what she told her or if she even told her the truth. Somehow my grandmother said that I was wrong. She spoke with my mother, and they sided with Ms. Knowles. Right when I was about to see Ms. Knowles with my mother, Ms. Knowles’ face was covered in blood, and I woke up.

April 21

Sylvester Cane 2nd offense

After practice, Coach said that if throwers wanted their own seat to get to the bus earlier so that they could. The next day I arrived early and put my stuff in my seat. Jack handed me his travel bag. He wanted me to save him his own seat which was across from where I settled. Sylvester arrived late after everyone was seated on the bus. He then put his stuff in the seat where Jack was. He went to the building to get what he needed for the meet. Once he came back, I told him who was sitting in the seat that he places his belongings next to. Suddenly, he got loud with me and tried to tell me that Jack was going to sit with me. He told me that I was a freshman, so he had the right to do so. I told him that he should have come early like coach explained. His words were, “I don’t give a shit. He’s going to sit with you!” In that moment I felt that we are all in college and I am not a child. Do NOT talk to me like that. Instantly images of me stabbing him in the heart and throwing him off the bus were live. Then he would not have to worry about sitting next to anyone. The bad part about this bus ride was I had no way to get away from him to calm down. He was still too close in my space to not want his blood on my hands. I just really wanted him to die. It took me 2 and a half hours to calm down and to fall asleep. Once we got to a stop, I told my mom what was going on and she said that I needed to tell coach. I tried to be the bigger person before I told coach, so I brought it to his attention, and I tried to explain to him what was going on. I said’ “Hey Sylvester you can’t just say all that to me like that in an aggressive tone it messes with me on a level that’s not good. You know I’m in therapy etc. for anger.” His response was “NO don’t you talk to me like that.” At this point I knew I just needed to tell coach what was up. I was straight forward with him and told him that Sylvester had one more time. I even tried to talk to him myself. I ended the conversation saying that Sylvester would never see graduation.

Professor Nestley

I’ve never had bad experiences with teachers until I encountered a lonely man who looked as if he was in his late 30’s. Professor Nestley was my psychology teacher. At this point in the semester, he wanted us to complete a group experiment. With everything that was going on with me, I figured I could talk to him and tell him exactly what was going on and he would understand why it would not be a good time to do group work with anyone. Late into the experiment he told me that I needed to get with a group, but everyone was fairly done with it. I ended up doing the entire experiment on my own and realized that the experiment did not need a group. After I was done, I waited to receive my grade. I figured because I had already told him about my situation, and he said he understood, my grade should have been normal. Once I was done, he said that the video was great but because the experiment was for a group, he deducted tremendously. So, I said that I did not think that it was fair to deduct my points when I explained to him my situation. I thought that if I got counseling and disabilities services involved, he would change my grade. However, the rules at that institution stated that the professor had the final say so. I was furious. My counselor contacted the head of the department to get things in order, but they told her the same thing.

After that happened, my only request was to take my final either in another room or in the hallway where I could be away from him. The one thing that I never play about is my grades. His life was in jeopardy, and I took actions to not have the option to where I could harm him. My counselor thought that was the best route to go. I ended up getting denied my request to take it in another room even with being supervised. So, I was told by my psychiatrist to take double the medicine so that I would be able to stand being around him. Of course, that night his death was planned out. I had a safety plan the was in motion by my counselor out solely for him. However, the parts of the plan that I was supposed to read to calm myself down was ineffective. Instead, I started doing research on him. I knew where he stayed, what car he drove, his license plates, his schedule for classes and office hours. I knew so much that I scared myself. Yet, I was tired of fighting back what I wanted to do and now I was ready to do what my brain was telling me to do. I went to class that morning high off medicine. As I got closer to the psychology department, I could feel my anger increasing and the medicine decreasing in power. By this time, I had gone through so many sleeping pills, antipsychotics, antidepressants, and anxiety meds that my doctor did not know what to do.

The time had come. I was trying my best to keep my attention off him the entire time I was testing. It was so bad that I don’t even remember taking the test of if I had any of the questions right. My focus was to get as far as possible from him. As the time went on, I began to escape reality and fall into the dark pits of my mind that I never wanted to see. It was as if I was knocking on the doors of hell to release evil upon this man who in my mind would be better off dead. The sane part of me was attempting to leave but we had to personally hand him our tests. By this time, I looked as if my skin was boiling from fire burning within. I handed him my paper and I felt as I was reaching to open that door to mayhem. I walked outside of his door which usually calmed me down, but I was in too deep to turn around. I stood outside his door; face flushed as if I was no longer me anymore. Time began to slow down. My hand was on that knob ready to twist and open. While twisting the door know there was a faint voice as if it was in the distance quietly telling me to walk away. It startled me so it was like I jumped back away from the door. This voice said it again two more times and I instantly came back to reality in full. I don’t believe I had blinked at all while I was outside that door starring at the professor. All I knew was that I needed to get the hell away from there.

Dream 2

As days continued to pass by, I had another dream that was set up a bit different from the last. Before I went to sleep, I was scrolling through Facebook. There was an article on there about a man who had dismembered a woman’s body. I did not read the article only the title. After I went to sleep, a dream had come to. There was this guy I was with and his little brother. We were in a neighboring city from my hometown. Someone off the street told us that it was not safe to go back to the city. However, we went anyway. We drove there and suddenly; we lost the car we were in. We were in the park and a bus that was on fire was trying to run us over. The guy and his brother took off and hid behind a tree. Once I got to the tree, the bus was close behind me. I jumped through an opening in the tree and the bus crashed. We looked to see if anybody was driving the bus and there was no one. We walked to my house, and we lost his little brother. We opened a door in my house which turned into the scene changing to a house that I was not familiar with. As we were walking down the stairs, his little brothers’ hand was attached to the ceiling fan above. As we walked through the house, the house began to change again. It looked like my aunts’ house. Then there were body pieces everywhere. There were heads hanging from the ceiling. We approached a room where we saw his little brother. He was being cut apart in a bathtub by an old woman. It was too late to save him, so we tried to escape unnoticed. The settings began to change again. We were now in the street and body parts were hanging from trees. Suddenly, the dream changed to us jumping into a storage unit because we were trying to get away from the old lady who was cutting up all the bodies. She was after us because she somehow saw us escaping the house. After we found an open unit, the dream was over as if we had won a video game.

Dream 3

I was starting to have dreams more often to the point where sometimes I did not want to fall asleep. My therapist told me that it would be best to stay away from action or horror movies and shows. So, I would try to watch cartoons when I could or attempt to stay away from social media that could put anything in my head that was horrific. This dream was about a school trip to the college that I was attending. The dream never actually took place on campus. We were in the park down the street. Everything in the dream was up to date but technology was in the era of flip phones. I was carrying the same phone that I had in the fifth grade. In the park there were two puppies and three balls that were mine. Suddenly from far away a big snow fall was coming our way. They immediately told us to get to the busses. My best-friend grabbed the puppies, and I had the balls. As I was running to the bus, I dropped my phone, so I went back picked it up. Once I got to the bus, my mom knew exactly what was going on. She was headed to me. While the bus was driving, she passed us. I saw the car slide as she tried to turn around. The bus slid as well but I got out and she pulled me into her car. We were headed back to my hometown. My college was no longer there. It had been consumed by a giant snowball. Once we were in our hometown we met up with my grandparents and my other dog. They were also fighting to travel away from being consumed by the ball. When we crossed the water dividing that states, the snow did not follow. Since the snow had hit the bridge, it began to break apart. We were dodging all the cracks and holes as if it was an end of the world movie. Finally, we had made it to safety, and I woke up.

Introduction of my care team

Yolanda Mere- Therapist

Every time I would enter her office, my body would change. My hands would swell, face would turn red, and my body temperature would increase. Anything surrounding our session would irritate me. Her phone in her office would ring and I would get so angry that I would have visions of smashing her phone into the wall. The entire session I would be so tense just sitting there to the point where I would sweat so bad. I would have to change clothes after I left her office if I could. She would often give me techniques to do when I feel like I am about to have a mental outbreak. I really wanted the techniques to diffuse my situations even if it was for a little while, but they never worked. Some techniques even made it worse for me to be around other people while I was doing them. While I was in those sessions with Yolanda, I never wanted to hurt her, but I did want to destroy her office. I could tell that it was something about her that made her a haven. When I came back from one of our breaks, I then realized that she was pregnant. I knew that was the reason why I never had a feeling to harm her. It was almost as if it was a red flag over her the entire time that we saw each other for sessions.

Ashley Stanley- Psychiatrist

She was cool and understanding throughout my time in school. She’s the person who prescribed all the medicines that I was on. Basically, she evaluated my sessions with Yolanda and every week she would speak with me to see how the medicines were working. I remember it like it was yesterday. She first started me on Clonazepam with Citalopram to calm down my anger. Clonazepam was a controlled substance, but it was used to mellow a person out. This medication was used to slow down my reaction time to situations. If I could have just a split second in time to catch myself, I could attempt to diffuse intense anger before it reached the Blackout Anger stage. Those two medicines were what I was on for the remainder of the time that I was at college. While on those medications there were more that I was prescribed every week. After week 1 of taking the two main medicines she prescribed me a sleeping aide, Lunesta. After a week of taking that, I was still unable to sleep at night. Imagine being a full-time college student athlete and never being able to sleep. Horrible! The next week she prescribed Ambien, which is a sedative. It can treat insomnia. Of course, I went another week with no sleep. She was sure that this medicine would work because it is one that works with about 85-90% of her patients. But I guess I was a part of the remaining population because I did not work for me.

After a while of being on the two main medicines it was hard to participate in my sport. Throwing heavy objects using a technique that requires fast rotations does not work well with being on medicine that makes you high. It was a disaster waiting to happen. At practice I was feeling good, and I cleared discus training spinning and all. When I switched over events, I thought that I was fine seemingly as I had just thrown my personal best on the medicine. After having the best few throws, I decided to do one more. I felt as if I should have left that throw as my best of the day but one more didn’t seem too bad. I ended my throw on top of the medal ring that surrounds the circle to set the standard of where a person can be inside of the ring. After I landed on it, I did not think nothing of it because I was determined to throw passed what I just threw. I got back in the ring threw at least four more times. Once those turns were over and my adrenaline was gone, the pain was above my tolerance. I went to the trainer so that she could check it out and she already knew something was wrong. I ended up having to go to the doctor and I tore my planter fasciitis. I was devastated because the championship was right around the corner, and I knew it was not going to be healed by then. I was depressed even more than before so now none of the medicines were working.

Weeks passed, and I was only getting about two hours of sleep at the max. I was trying to go to practice but watching my teammates throw and knowing that I could not, hurt worse than the pain of injuring my foot. I asked the doctors could I participate on it even though I was in a boot, and he said I could, but it would hurt extremely bad, and I would cause more damage. I was thinking to myself like I know this man did not say yes if I am going to damage it even more. I need my feet to throw! You are not making any sense right now Doc! Can I see your degree? What athlete would risk being unable to throw at all just to throw at one meet when I have 3 more years of college to participate, so I thought.

Legendary Black Book Cont.

Mackenzie Godfrey 2nd offense

Sports Meeting

After the end of the season, we had a meeting discussing compliance information. After the meeting, I was trying to get the attention of the person over the meeting to answer a few questions. At this time, I was injured and on crutches, so I asked Macy to get their attention, so they could come over to me. Makenzie decided it was okay to be in my face with an aggressive attitude telling me that I needed to hurry my ass up and let’s go. Remind you all, that she is not the one driving. Jack was the one who we were riding with, and he was still sitting down. Suddenly, I felt myself go from 0-100 full on black out anger. At that moment I thanked God for my roommate being able to see that it was happening. Makenzie was on crutches as well and had no chance of stopping me. My injury would have been covered by adrenaline and no longer being in my body. Once time slowed down, I began to see horrific images. I kicked her leg from up under her while I was pushing her down to the ground. In this same moment as she was falling there were images of me jabbing an ink pen, that was in my hand, into her neck. I was a split of a second away from acting on what I saw, and Macy was constantly calling my name. I finally came to because she had caught my attention. The images became blurry as they evaporated from my mind. I thanked Macy later as I explained to her what was going on even though she said she could see it in my face.

Finally, I made it to the end of the semester! I was surprised that I was able to finish with no blood on my hands. I told my mother that I didn’t feel like I needed to return because we needed to figure out what was wrong. Of course, for me not returning to school was just to figure out what was wrong. I had plans to return after because my experience before, was everything the I desired in a college experience. To my mother it meant that I was saying no more school forever. So, she convinced me to stay. I decided to also stay doing the summer for training purposes. I ended up renting a house with Katrina, her boyfriend Kyle, and Jack. It was great for the time being. I was able to get a summer job at a winery just to have a little income to pay my portion of rent. Everything was cool until Katrina would come home from work and ask me what I cooked for myself and her boyfriend. I was the youngest in the household since Jack wanted to go home for a bit. But Katrina and Kyle were in their 20s. I told her that he was a grown man, and he could fix himself something to eat or she could cook him something before she left. He was not my responsibility and if all he had eaten was cereal was on him. I never approved of their relationship because he was using her. He was your typical mamas’ boy, video gaming, didn’t want to work, complained about doing chores, and only wanted to hang with his friends and drink. I never knew what she saw in him. I could never.

June 7th, 2016, letter to God for Nalo

Dear God,

The time has come, and I have decided to attempt to start Nalo’s process by going to Nigeria at the end of July. I recently learned that the process takes five months and I want everything to go by smooth. I am ready to receive and fight for the blessing you have sent me. I pray to you tonight that my family understands my desire to meet the man of my dreams. I pray that they support my decision and that we can make a way for me to go in July. I appreciate all that you have done for me and the people you have put in my life who are very understanding and on the same page as I am in life. You have always put trials in my way to test my faith in you and so far, I have been fighting extremely hard because I know what you are doing and why. You are doing these things to prepare me for the biggest test life will throw at me in the future. I have never been happier to have your son in my life. He has been the greatest gift you have given me. It is not that I am rushing to marry him so quickly, I have just prepared myself for this for so long that the feeling that people say they have when they absolutely know who their husband or wife will be. That is exactly what I feel, the feeling that is unexplainable. The feeling that no one in the world has power to take away and I know in the beginning it was a little bumpy, but I always heard your voice telling me that I was going down the wrong road.

Once again, I came back fully prepared and dedicated to this young man even though we are miles and miles apart. I still thank you each day because I know you have everything under control. I love and adore you to the fullest. You have been the foundation of my life and have brought me a long way from what I wrote in my bible years ago. You never left me ever when the world was trying to change my views. I came back stronger than ever. These past months the devil thought he had me with this anger, but I am working on it, re-evaluating what I have said in my therapy sessions because each time I have had a moment you were right there. You were telling me that everything would be fine, move along and go about my business. I appreciate it with my entire heart, body, mind, spirit, and soul. You are my protector and my provider. My life has always been in your hands. All I ask is that the plans for Nalo fall through and we can be one. I am in love with this young man that no one else appeals to my eyes. He has taught me so much as well as bringing me even closer to you as I should be. He always brightens up my days and I feel that his spirit protects me at night. I believe that he feels my pain as I feel his. I never knew that the guy from so many years ago would be my fiancé. I am so happy to be with him. You know what is on my heart and what is on his. You know before anyone what will happen next, and I trust you with every decision. I know we are as one because I am your child. I declare that all will be well and that your word is your word for you are the Great I Am. I love you always, Amen.

 One morning I woke up with an idea to start back drawing. Since I had only taken one drawing class and figured out that I really knew how to make art. I needed to make some additional income. There were other drawings that I had, and I decided to make copies of them to sale. It was the best start to what I never knew would be a part of my life. I began to promote my art and a lot of people were willing to buy drawings and copies. These copies were literally on copying paper. I didn’t know exactly when I would be home to sell them officially but to know that people were interested was all that I needed to continue to produce.

June 27th Letter to God

Dear God,

Just want to thank you for allowing me to get a shift to continue to be able to complete my mission to get Nalo here. I thank you for opening doors I thought were closing. You have been too good to me. You have been through the storm with me. Watching over me until I figured out who I was supposed to be with, and what I was supposed to be doing. You have truly been excellent to me, and I appreciate everything honestly. I won’t ever stop praying and believing in you. You’re the foundation of my life, and without you my life will indeed be nothing. I know you have my back, and this is your will. It came sooner than I expected but that is how you work when it’s all in your timing. Being with this man, your son has been amazing. It’s not often that I come across men that reflect the men in my family. You have really given me someone who can keep me on track spiritually. It’s crazy to me even though you knew what you were doing, to date/marry a track athlete. It’s amazing to be able to motivate one another in the one thing that we love but not as much as we love you. We talk as if we have known each other since birth. It is never a dull moment. It is said when you seek/find that one you automatically know, and I know Nalo is my one and all. You have shown me the right path and I am rolling with it. It took me a while to listen and hear that soft voice that my granny used to always say she heard but going through the mental stages I know exactly what she is talking about, and I understand. I am just so thankful Jesus. I love you.

I love you for what you have done in the past, present, and what you will do in the future. I know my future will be bright because you are my Sun and if I follow in your footsteps, it will always be bright. I am so happy to have that shift in life. You heard my cry. I know I should not have been worrying because my life is in your hands. I think I have been doing well as far as being calm and patient for things to take place. You are doing more than wonders even though you already know what is going on. I want to tell you anyway that I have a few things that are in progress. For me to get to Nalo I must get a yellow fever shot, visa for my passport, his ring, and my plane ticket. Even though you already know my situation my shot will be covered by my insurance. All I must see is if I can get the pills for Malaria. You have allowed me to have an extra day of work so that will cover paying the Visa. I work July 9th, so I am sure Nalo’s ring will be taken care of as well. You know how it will be if I may have another problem, please make sure there is a way for me to work again please. The plane ticket is the most expensive. I just hope my family and the gift you have given me to draw will cover that expense. I have been doing all that I can and with your help things have been coming into reality. Never would I have ever thought he would have been my true heart. I really love him. Again, God, I really thank you in advance. This has been so far from the best to come, and I know that you have more in store. We can get through this and make it possible. The three of us are strong and we stand before you every day. We ask that you allow us to live here on earth ready and willing to make you proud. Love you God, Your Child, Amen.

It’s crazy that I wrote so many letters to God focused on a man that was miles away, but I never wrote an actual letter discussing my health issues and seeking a way through these troubling times. I had put all my focus into what I thought I needed to be happy vs what I needed to be okay. About a month of being in the house Katrina asked if it would be okay if her grandmother came to visit for a couple weeks. I had no problem with it, and she said that she would cook the entire time that she was there. Katrina was Dominican so I was excited for the food. Upon her arrival everything was great until every morning her grandmother would be up early in the morning yelling throughout the house and speaking in Spanish. She would slam doors and it was a mess. Some of the food was good and some was not so good. Her grandmother began to trigger what I was trying to escape from. I couldn’t take it anymore so I called home to ask if someone could get me for the remainder of the time and my auntie was willing to make the drive, so I left. My time home was okay. It was just a break from everything. I then sold the art to the people who said that they were interested.

After a couple days of being home, I saw my uncle at my granny’s home. He looked at me and tried to give me a handshake because of what happened before I went to school. I instantly rejected his hand and gave him the biggest hug I had to offer! I wanted him to know that I saw him, I loved him, and that it was understood. Looking at him was a different type of feeling and at times I felt like I could feel his pain through my own issues. He then knew that we were alright. There was no bad blood at all. Then shortly, maybe a week or so after of enjoying family time, the Track and Field Olympics were on. It was an incredible day in the field events. I was so eager watching the women throw. After Meme Chase came back on her last throw, she became the first USA woman athlete to do so since 1948. After the competition I was super excited. Shortly after I received a message from someone, I had never received text messages from.

August 12th, 2016

I received a messaged from my uncle. This was the time where the 2016 Olympics were happening. His message read, “The black girl from the USA won the shot, that can be you, niece luv ya (thumbs up).” I responded saying that I had seen her and thanks for the words of encouragement. I’m working for it 2020. Here I come (Heart Eyes). I thought that would have been the end of the conversation because my uncle and I do not text or talk like that, but he then responded saying, “Yep, you good! I wouldn’t have ever thought I would have made a business out of djing of all things but, you never know what God has in store for you. Keep the faith, you ok (thumbs up). I responded saying thanks uncle, I really appreciate it (smiley face). He shocked me again saying, “Hey, you got to take what you want and get it. It’s not easy, but you got it in you. I have never really talked to you, but you got this in you and don’t let nobody or nothing stop you. Alright back to this djing, I’ll holla, Luv Ya.” I responded saying that I Love Him Too (big eye smiley face).

Roughly two days later, it was time to move back to school. Upon my arrival, there was nothing good about living in the house anymore. Katrina was trying to get her sister who was not really on the right path to move in with us. Jack and I did not approve because there wasn’t enough space. The plan was only for us to live together while in school. She was adamant on her sister coming to stay even though it wasn’t her home to decide that. After a couple days of discussing what would take place, we decided to leave the house all together. We just had to figure out how to get out of our contract. Jack and I planned to move into an apartment complex, so we were fine. Jack’s father inspected the house, and it was not up to code, so we got of our contract free of charge with a partial refund. Close to the time of moving, Jack sent me a text messaging saying that he had decided to move with some other teammates to ensure that he was good. This left me high and dry with school around the corner and nowhere to stay. All the apartment complexes were filling quickly and there weren’t any good deals available.

 After telling Coach John what had taken place, he gave me the names of a couple of complexes that I could possibly move into by the school. My mother asked if I could move back on campus, but all the rooms had been filled. I told my mother that I felt like this was a sign to just come home. I was able to get out of the house deal with ease with money in return. I felt that I could finally get the help I needed. However, my mother told me no because I needed to go to school. It was as if she was constantly ignoring the fact that my health was not good. I felt that school would always be there but with my mental status failing, someone’s life wouldn’t be. But I just left it alone and was able to get an apartment down the street from the school. I did not have a car, so the walk was long. I also did not have the funds for internet service so I would have to spend long hours on campus to make things work. Even though my views highly suggested that it was not the best idea, I tried to make it work.

Late night Prayer Message to God for Nalo

My prayer wish is that he finds his way to me, and we worship you to the fullest as one. Amen.

Shortly after that prayer I realized that I was doing a bit much with the whole dating across seas and that I need to focus a lot more with my health issues, so I decided to call it quits to just be friends. If it happened later, then it was meant but I was not in a good space to be trying to map out a way to get him over here to marry and that whole process. Before classes started, I was content. I was just ready for track to kick up. I had previously decided to change my major from Sport Management to Early Childhood Education in hopes that it would be a better route as far as courses and long-term work. Due to my sickness, I decided that I was going to let the professors who I had emails for, know before classes started that I was sick. I wanted to them know that I was more than capable of getting my work done but some days I might not be able to attend class. I even told them that if I needed to meet with them outside of class time, I was willing to do whatever I had to. I gave them my counseling and disability contacts, so they could confirm that I was not lying about my health and that it was getting worse. Once I sent all teachers emails stating what was happening, I thought that everything would go as planned and it would be a smooth sophomore year.

My English teacher said that whatever I needed, to just ask, and she would help to ensure that I had all that I needed for her class. I assumed that this would be the response from all my teachers. I was indeed wrong. I missed the first day of my math class because my body was spasming in my sleep. The effect of the spasming caused me not to be able to move for hours. I felt as if someone had beaten me in my sleep. The very next time we had class I was there, and the first thing she said, “Are you in this class?” I said yes ma’am I apologize for missing day one. I have health issues that I need to talk to you about later. She said, “You need to act like you are in this class and be here every day.” She then was caught up in her words. She’d assigned work the first day of class. Even though I was not there to know what she assigned, the work was online. I completed the work before hand, and I believe I was the only absent person to have completed the work not knowing that she had assigned it in the first place. Even after that I still turned red, but I kept calm. After class she said that if we needed to discuss anything with her, she provided us information on her office hours and her email. Of course, I had classes during her office hours, so I emailed her everything that was going on and telling her that if she needs to contact counseling and disabilities to confirm my health she may do so. She emailed me back saying that she appreciated me telling her what was going on.

In life there will be moments that won’t be in our favor. The catch to what my math teacher said that aided in my decision to leave the university was, she said that she needed a list of days that I would be sick, so she would know what was wrong. Now, to me, how can I give you a list of days of when I’m going to be sick ahead of time as if I can foresee the future? Honestly, who in their right mind would expect a person to be able to do that. I instantly sent that email to my counselor. She and Ashley (psychiatrist) were pissed. After that, I said to myself that maybe I will have better luck with the psychology teacher. Reminder that the psychology teacher I had in year one took my illness as a joke and was trying to mess with my grades. I had hoped that this teacher would be different. Again, I was wrong! After I sent him the same email that I had sent out to my other teachers, I was waiting on his response. A day later I checked my email and he said that he could give me the work that I had already missed from the previous classes but after that he was not going to help me anymore. He said that he felt like it wasn’t fair for the other students that I did not have to attend class to receive my work. I kindly explained to him that I was not trying to get over on him and I am not like the other students. They were healthy and able to attend class. I told him that I was not going to miss every single class. I just wanted the work from class that I could not make it to.

It was like Counseling and Disability Services was not taken seriously there. Why would you deny a person with mental health issues the right to get their education in college, especially if they are more than willing to go the extra mile to get the work? At the end of his response, he said that if I did not show up for classes I would make bad grades in his class because he was not going to work with me. After that email, I told my counselor that if I was going to continue to go to school, I could not work with teachers like that. I now believed that all the math and psychology teachers had the same view. I just would have thought that the psychology department would understand what a student was going through with mental health issues since the same illnesses that I was going through was what we were discussing in the classroom. At that point there was no attending that school. I was not about to go a full year with teachers like that. I had only three weeks to go when I had the safety plan out on my old teacher. I will not go 16 weeks with two ignorant teachers. I knew that if I would have stayed that somebody would have died for their actions, and I would have shown no remorse. I would not want to go through school being ill and still trying to create ways to have a successful college life with teachers who were like that. I felt like if they died, people before me with mental issues would be happy that they got what they deserved and mentally challenged students after me would never have to meet those three teachers ever. The message would have been loud and clear. Those teachers do not deserve to teach honestly.

After we had our first Track and Field meeting, we had set dates for physicals. Once that day arrived, we all made our way to the clinic. As we were waiting, I was thinking to myself if I was going to continue to attend school. Track has always been the key factor that I will fight to continue to do. I was also contemplating if I was even going to pass my physical. Once I got there, they took our blood pressure. Out the entire day of doing physicals with all the different sports, my blood pressure was the only one that was in stage two hypertension. The guy took it three more times and it increased every time. He asked me was that normal and I told him that it was, and nobody could really give me a clear answer as to why it was continuously high. After that, I patiently waited to see the doctor to do the physical. One of my teammates came out and she said that she was being redshirted because she did not pass her physical. When I went in there, I saw my actual doctor who I had been seeing for indoor season, but I was giving a different one. Once he took my blood pressure again and looked at my hands, he asked me a few questions. I told him that my doctor was there and that he should bring him in to talk. He did and once he came, all the doctors were in my room. All physicals had stopped because they knew I failed my physical, but they still wanted me to be able to have my season. They did not know what was wrong, so they start asking me did I know of doctors that I would want to see. They said that they would get me whatever doctor I needed to be able to go to school and throw. I was shocked that they cared about me that much to pass my physical even though I really did not pass. I was very emotional after that. I remembered that we had our Sports Banquet that day, so it was kind of exciting. I knew that I had worked hard my first year regardless of not being able to compete for outdoor conference. It was my time to get my letterman’s jacket and that I did.

The next day we had another team meeting and afterwards I had the hardest talk with Coach John. It took all my might not to cry in front of him as I told him what my next plans were. We agreed that I would drop out Friday since that was the last day with the scholarship and I would go home for a year, get the help I needed and get back to school the following year with my scholarship back in my hands. If they could find out sooner what was wrong then, I could come back in the spring.

Aug 26, 2016

Final Decision

That Friday morning the deed was done. I was no longer a Student- Athlete. Now I had to figure out how to get out of my apartment lease. Mom was upset that I dropped out on her birthday, but she had to understand that I was not going to make it and I did not want bad grades on my record. She was so upset that she ended our phone conversation leaving me to call my grandmother to figure out what we needed to do next. After discussing everything with her, I called the apartment associate to see how I could get out of that lease. I explained to her what was going on with my health and we came to an agreement that I could leave with no additional charges if everything was clean and not broken. I couldn’t get the deposit back but that happens. I forgot that since my scholarship covers everything, the money that I used to pay rent for that apartment I had to give it back since I was leaving.

 I tried to talk the school out of the payment since I was leaving for medical purposes but that was not an option. So, from rent expenses I owed $495. Some was for the payment that my scholarship gave for rent and the other was for an iPad that I never went to get. I tried to call them to explain to them that I never picked up the iPad and that I wanted that off my bill, but they kept giving me the run around. By this time, I was back home so I had no way of going up to the school to straighten out the situation. My mom told me that she would just pay the bill. But, since she kept getting sick and was off from work, the bill continued to increase due to interest.

Once I was home and settled, I decided to go ahead a start dating as well as help one of my best friends caring for her son. I would normally get him around 5 in the morning and keep him until she was off work or when I felt like bringing him back. I was always nurturing and understanding of babies, so this was the perfect way to keep calm and manage my odd health issues. After a while I then started to heavily hang with a nice guy, I met on a dating app while I was in school. I thought he was a great person just from our conversation. He was a marine which was a bit alarming just because mentally I feel as though they are trained to be wild. But I went on anyway to engage in a conversation. He was known by my cousin because they went to school together, so I felt a bit at ease. Since I was home, I figured I’d start dating. Soon we were literally hanging every night that we were both free. I didn’t think nothing of it because it was a great way to keep my mind from realizing that my life has literally gone down the drain. I mean I still had hope that doctors would figure it out but deep down it was slowly fading away.

One night I was getting ready to head out and my mother asked where I was going. I told her to visit him, and she immediately shut me down that I was going out too much and that there was no room for mother daughter time. In my head I felt as though the entire time I was at my college life was smooth, I went wherever I wanted to go and enjoyed my time being a teen with independence. Now that I was home it was back to my mother needing to be my priority. However, I left anyway because that’s just not what I was getting ready to allow. I did not have a choice in staying in school because my health would not allow me, but I do have a choice to continue to be as social as I can to assist in the healing process.

After a while things began to feel a bit off even more than they were. I had insane insomnia; my eyes began to droop, I had bags under them as that were in 4-5 rows sitting on top of my cheeks. It was a hell of a nightmare in my reality, but the trauma didn’t end there. September 14, 2016, described as the day my time on earth stood completely still. Early evening, I remember sitting in the basement watching tv and suddenly, my mother yells out in distress. I immediately went upstairs to see what was going on and she explains with tears in her eyes that my uncle had shot himself in the head. It was as if everything instantly became numb. I slowly turned around and preceded to head back downstairs. It was as if my emotions could not process what she had told me. I sat back down on the couch and every single moment my uncle and I shared growing up rushed through my mind as if I had been on the brink of dying inside and my life was flashing. Suddenly, every emotion of my distress lashed out in forms unimaginable. It was so great that my mother rushed down to hold me. I just couldn’t believe that this was real. I felt as though my reality had been altered once again and I was living in a distorted dream. After we both calmed down a bit we headed to where the incident happened to find that they had already taken him to the hospital.

The prayer warriors were out, and the family came. We had so much support that it put us a bit more at ease. My uncle went into surgery to see if they could remove the bullet, so we were waiting for the verdict. We waited and waited and waited until the doctor came out to tell us what we will never forget. They said that the bullet shattered into a lot of pieces and that there was no way to basically help to bring him back. It was the worst evening early morning that we could go through. My uncle left this earth! We were not prepared for his departure, but I knew I needed to see him as soon as they let us view him. I couldn’t help but remember our conversation. The only conversation we had really had, just me and him and all I had was those messages and memories growing up. With his goofy, playful, and loving self, we had our down times, but I would have never thought he would have left so soon. As I entered the room it felt surreal. I felt as though he was still present, yet it also felt so cold. To look down at his breathless body was the second to last time that I would see him but never the same as all the memories before. My God! My uncle he was to see me off to the big leagues to win just as he said I could. He believed in my craft at something that I didn’t even think he really knew about. He wasn’t there for any of the events, but he knew. HE KNEW! HE FUCKIN KNEW! He was supporting in his own way that resonated with me that pursuing your dreams matters above it all.

I was not okay, but the time had come for the funeral, and we all wore cranberry. We were during alright to where we could joke about things that he would have done or said or things like we would stand him up in his DJ attire on the ones and twos, but the day was still an unreal event. As we walked in, the presence was heavy! The church was filled inside and out for my uncle to the point we knew that he was loved but to know how much took the load off just being around family and dear friends. But man, oh man when it was time for the family to make their way into the church to take their seats, I just couldn’t take it. It was so much running through my mind that my uncle was in the casket in front of me. How? Why? Now? No! but yes! He was in there and my body temperature and blood pressure went up significantly. I just could not hold it together, there was no way! Suddenly, I was just shaking my head in so much disbelief and I found myself releasing all my energy out and my auntie was there to hug me tightly!

In the moment it was like:

To my uncle, I feel you, we heard you, we love you, we love, you, we miss you, but WE KNOW! We KNEW, We Understand! If you know you know! We are all battling with a different type of pain and sometimes that pain grows into something that will never be the same. We did, we lived, we loved, and we laughed and for my uncle he will forever be that one to have created and continued the legacy that we will always hold dear and near. We will forever REMEMBER THE BEAT and for that we will continue with his and our legacy!

As I cried out for my dear uncle there are a million gaps of his funeral that I cannot even discuss because at times I don’t even think I was mentally present. There are parts that I knew granny delivered a message that would resonate and there are parts that I remember where my cousin spoke on his father, but I can not elaborate on my feelings. The only part I can describe is the final viewing for the family. This is where I decided to put one of my most precious medals in my uncles’ pocket. The moment that killed me inside is, his pocket was located over his heart and when I placed it in there, there was no doubt that I couldn’t spiritually feel his presence or physically feel his heartbeat or physically hear his laughter or physically feel my uncle! God! My uncle! I broke down and I’m breaking down. I’m impaired and numbed to that very moment. That very moment, again, the only thing that I remember is that I had a fan in my hand during the funeral and as I began to get sick with my own mental health issues that fan became a part of my hand. I didn’t want to alarm anyone that I was not well, so I played all my cards right and I hoped that I didn’t pass out at the funeral because that was the very last thing, we needed from me or my mother. We needed to get through and make it to the other side. I can’t necessarily say he would have wanted us to be happy, though I know he had humor for everything. I just had to pull a different type of strength for that funeral. I eventually made it outside, and my mother had to pry, with force, the fan out of my hand. I was just at ease that the ultimate feeling of my sickness did not show its ugly face. It was just not the time, not the moment, not the occasion for it. That day was for my dear uncle. To send him off to be with the rest of our people. I know they probably missed his jokes as well. But until I see him again my agenda will never fail of what I truly need to accomplish in my life. No matter what age or how long it takes me, I will accomplish my task for him and myself. That bond just won’t break, and I will never give, no matter the competition, on pushing forth to those bigger games. No knees, no bad shoulders, hips, or anything will put me in a place to determine otherwise. I treasure those messages and one day from above he will witness and when my time comes, we will have our next conversation. He can count on it, and we then realized that my baby cousin who was born June 18, 2016, a gift to our family. She was the miracle baby was born to keep our spirits up in our time of grief.

After that I ended up breaking up with the marine because he was not in my best interest as far as my health. There were a couple of times where he would try to make me have an anger episode so he can see what it looks like on purpose. At that point I just was not having it and those two times I could have really killed him. It wasn’t like it was top level skilled marine and I knew that my strength would do damage like no other if I was caught in the moment and unable to turn my switch off. No one wants to feel as though they aren’t safe inside their own relationship, and he was not a good fit,

October 24th, 2016, Constance Tucker and Family

After the passing of my uncle, a little over a month later, specifically October 24th, 2016, I lost one of my best friends. But not to death. It was more so to misunderstanding, choice words, truth bombs and other things that young adults may go through with people they deeply care for. For the most part if she ever reads this book. I do apologize for my negligence and my rather brute commentary. But I couldn’t control things due to my mental incapacities and for that, I apologize for my deliverance in my message, and I hope you are well in your marriage and your career. Sometimes friends who are overprotective will kill you with the truth in a way where sometimes they are tired of seeing your hurt. After a while they lash out, misuse information, and do other things but with my illness I did more. But I do not apologize for trying to get you to see the bigger picture as well as I still root for you and your success though we are still on different terms. I will say that I do know that you hid the fact that we communicated a while ago and I don’t blame you for it because even in that moment, I was still not sound enough to have that conversation with you on the topic of why I exploded because you would not truly understand my issues as you didn’t then. But I hope this shines a bit of light on the situation as I explain.

 Constance and I had been cool since middle school and when we started doing track and field together in high school, we shared a sisterly bond from then on. Once Big Mike transferred to our high school, they became best friends. During this time, we all to some degree had a crush on this young man but he then became a part of our friends’ group. Towards the end of our high school days, she was trying to control him about his past relationship, girls he was talking to at the school, picking arguments with them to the point nobody really wanted to talk to him and if they did, they would tell us but say that because Constance was around, they do not want problems. All the girls would talk about her so bad, and she thought they were her friends, but we would hear what they were saying. She started letting too many people in on her problems until she was the talk of our senior year of high school. Then she starts pressuring him senior year around the time of prom because this was her time to have him. We had a conversation with him before prom and the way he was talking was that he was going to ask her to prom because that’s what everyone expected, not because he wanted too deep down. He said that he did not have a choice.

We were trying to tell him that just because people expect you to, doesn’t mean that you must, especially if you don’t want to, but he did anyway. He made his grand proposal at her house, and I think it just went down-hill from there. Nobody said what happened or what went on until months later she told me, but he told me before she did. Then one night we were all together without her and he said he did not like her in that way, but he felt pressured, and he told her he did not like her in that way. He originally had a crush on our friend Valarie when he first got to E. Side but because she got angry at him when she told her he left it alone. She was also pissed when I had information that he wanted, and I jokingly said he had to kiss me to find out what it was. I did not know that he had discussed with her about kissing me for real and she was ignoring everybody for the next couple days. Now we get close to Big Mike’s birthday. She was already upset with him that she was getting ready for his college homecoming, and she was supposed to attend. When it came up to the days, he was not talking to her for real because he really did not want her there. We had told her that since he was a college football player that she needed to stop trying to control his actions because she was going to get her feelings hurt. Sure enough, that’s exactly what happened. She called me hurt at what happened, but I did not want to say that I told you so. She already knew. So back to it being his birthday, it took her a while to even post on his wall telling him happy birthday because she was throwing shade on all the other social media’s. Big Mike wasn’t active as much on his social sites, so she knew she could say whatever and get away with it.

We, as a friend’s group, were tired of seeing all the posts so I just flat out and texted her. I did not sugar coat it either. I said, “Stop making so many posts putting your business out there and showing shade.” One thing led to another, and we were going back and forth about everything. I was being honest with her trying not to tell her exactly what he said because he is also my friend but trying to let her know to move on. She felt some type of way and instead of her taking it in and recognizing that it was the truth, I assumed she took it as she knew how I felt and that I had felt that way the whole time. Honestly everyone felt the same way, but you can only tell a person so much to protect them before they just find out the hard way. So, after the three hour long texting back and forth and even telling her that the people she went to college with from our school, that she was hanging tight with, were the same girls talking about her and dogging her out. I made a status on my social account about what was happening. She decided to make a status as well.

I never tagged her name or put it to where people would know who I was talking about. She decided to tag me in the status that she made. She had classmates that I didn’t even talk to, trying to add me to see what was going on. Basically, she wanted to have her rounds with me. How crazy is she to try to have her rounds with me and she out of all people knew my mental state and that I have homicidal ideation? After a while her whole family decided that they wanted to jump in, and they did not know what she was even mad about in the first place. If they would have read what was going on, they would have been looking at her like, “Girl leave that boy along. You know she right.” Just like the parents I let read it said the same thing. I thought I was in the wrong about what I said but I wasn’t. Instantly after her family jumped in my blood pressure spiked along with my homicidal ideation. If I would have seen any of them in that time, none of them would have seen another day. I told myself that they could all die and have one big family funeral. At this point I was ready to get blood on my hands and go to prison. This was the most images I had ever had of every single one of their deaths at once. I did not use any of the diffusion techniques to calm myself down. I truly wanted to make somebody out of an example. This conversation started at 8pm and around 3:56 I was constantly making death threats on Facebook but instead of posting them I would screenshot and erase them. Around 4:19 am I still could not sleep. My hands were swollen, headache was strong, and I just wanted to kill any one of them who had something to say. After that I finally went to sleep around 6am.

October 28 and 29th 2016

I am a sensitive soul when it comes to my family especially my aunt Annie. We may be four years apart, but we have been close and dressing alike since the beginning. Around this time, she was in a bad car accident, and it did not sit right with me. I have not seen her in a while already so when we were at Lotawata Creek I just wanted to be up under her. So, as I was messing with her, she told me to stop but I did not take it serious at first. I was playing with her again and I got the message, so I did stop. Then it went down-hill she kept egging it on about me playing with her and I asked her nicely to just let it go because it was bothering me. Of course, after I start talking to her about not showing my other side. She got smart with me trying to tell me she had one to. At this point there was no return for what I was about to see. She kept going and going and I felt myself switching gears. At this point, I am fighting myself because I never wanted to ever feel this way towards any of my family members. I never wanted to see their deaths play before my eyes. That was my biggest fear, and it was coming true. The moment time slowed down, and I saw images of me taking her head and smashing it into the table scared the life out of me. After dinner I tried to let it go but it would not go away. I did not go to sleep that night for the fact that it was replaying in my head. Scene by scene it played with different scenarios of putting her in her place for talking to me like that. A few minutes of having these thoughts I told myself that no matter who a person is, no matter how close they are to me, I am a threat to them all. If you come at me in those disrespectful types of ways towards my other side, I am more than likely to show what I do not like to see. But in all actuality, I just wanted love from her, but death was on my heart.

After that it just seemed like we as a family just couldn’t catch a break. It was test after test after test after test in our family. We received a call that my grandpa had passed out! My first thought was,” Are we getting ready to have something else drastic happen because I can’t take it.” There had already been many of nights where my thoughts were so intrusive, and I just didn’t know how much longer I could hold on before the darkness inside of me took full control, and I would be looking at my own funeral from above, knowing my family is now saying well at least she is now at peace. But grandpa in November of 2016 passed out due to blood clots making their way from his legs up into the upper half of his body. Coincidently as I was getting my own tests done for blood work after we found out he had pulmonary embolisms, my doctor just asked if anyone in my family that I knew of had it. Now I had to be referred to oncology to be monitored and tested for the same. However, I did have a bit of it, but it was so small that it wasn’t enough to be concerned that that would happen to me. But just knowing even if it’s small, there is so much going on within my body. I just can’t stomach the thought of adding another death pill, or another doctor’s appointment to my long list of specialists who couldn’t figure it out, I was just tired. Why the hell am I suffering this way and why am I the chosen one to have to be so strong to the point of reconstructing my mind to be some type of undefined thing that has power to do different unnatural things? Am I living in a truth where this type of brain activity is for real and everything else is not? Is that why I feel as though I don’t belong in this dimension?

The legacy never ends Dec 29th Remembering the Beat

My uncle’s birthday was coming up and it was time to celebrate him the same way that he would have celebrated his birthday ever year at one of the clubs he DJed for. It was a nice turnout, and everything was well. The only issue that I had was that my father pulled up. I was not on good terms with him, and I wasn’t ready to see him in person. I almost threw a fit, but I think that my vibe was so strong that he literally did not get close to us. I don’t know if it was on my face, if he saw it in my eyes, or if he could feel my energy beaming on him, but he never said anything and kept his distance. That was the best thing he could have done that day because I wanted my rounds for every year of my life that he had been absent or telling me lies about how he was going to do more. But overall, the event was great, and my uncle had his party with all the food that he would usually have. At the end we did a balloon release, and I was so in tuned that I just wished I could see him one last time.

Seeking more Help

After everything that had happened, I really needed to see a therapist. I searched within my healthcare network and found Mr. Mitch Stellar. As we started with our sessions, I found out very quickly that my intellectual components, as well as the severity of my illness, was extremely over this man’s knowledge of what to do. After a while he was strictly honest with me and said that what I was dealing with was over his skill set of what he knows how to do. I thanked him for being honest, but I was not at ease because I began to wonder if I could ever return to a life of normality or even get back to school. These things were still on my heart and my promise that I made to myself, and my uncle could only be achieved with the right coaching.

After I stopped my sessions with Mitch. I was furious, not at the psychiatrist, but because we had just found out that the lady they had hired for granny and grandpa to be their home health aid was not a good candidate. We all know that they are not to take additional money from the client as a gift or any gifts for that matter. I just couldn’t stand trifling people who know what they aren’t supposed to do yet they still choose to abuse the elderly, So, I took it upon myself to hire with the same company that she worked for, and I replaced her. I wasn’t doing anything due to my health but just being around my granny and doing things that I do on a daily would be a better choice than those types of people. I just hate that the people they chose to take care of my grandparents were people that we knew. Those types of people don’t deserve to work in that type of field, and I wish my granny would have told the company but being how she is she decided to let it go. I just felt like if she did it to us and she knew us, how many of our elders has she done that to? Sometimes keeping the peace creates windows for people to abuse others and that is something I will never let slide. My elders and elders period take up a large chunk of my heart and she will never be an okay person in my book. I will always and forever be my great grandparents’ keepers. They kept me going as people here on earth when I couldn’t keep myself going at all.

January 17, 2017

I had just had an appointment with a new psychiatrist. I went to my appointment and while I was there, they had me take an assessment of how I had been feeling and other things. It was roughly 60 questions or so. After I finished the assessment my weight and blood pressure were taken. I know that it was high by the way she was looking at me and she then asked how I felt. Around this time, I was still not sleeping at night so every night for a year, I would have maybe slept one to two hours if that. Some nights I never slept. The longest in this time was three days that I had not been sleep. Once I got to see the doctor, he listened to my story and after we discussed what was going on, he said some deep words that no one could tell me. He said, “I think I definitely know what’s wrong with you.” I was surprised because no one else could even say that much. He said, “I believe you have Manic Bipolar Depression.” I looked at him like dang, out of all the illnesses that once seems bad. He said, “I could be wrong, but I really believe this is what is wrong with you, so I am going to prescribe you Seroquel which is an antipsychotic. It can also help you with sleep at night, but I want to start you off with 25mg and every day I want you to increase by one. So, when you come in on your next appointment you should be at 100mg.” He said that he also needed me to go cold turkey off all other medicines and I told him that it would not be a problem because I do not have withdrawals. He said, “If I am correct, then you should feel better and sleep at night.”

I told my mother after I left out the office with him and she was surprised as well of the diagnosis. We went to get my prescription and the trial began. The next day I had a different appointment with the Oncology doctor. He had to do blood work to see if I had pulmonary embolism. He said that he will have my results when I have my next visit. After that the only thing I was doing was trying to make the medicine work. To make it short, after the day to day increase to 100mg, it just was not working. I was still the exact same as I was before I started the medicine. When I discussed the issue with him at my next appointment, he wanted to up the medicine on a trial run again. He said, “I am going to give you 200mg of Seroquel and I want you to add 1 each night and stop when you get to 600mg. After the first night of nothing happening, I thought that maybe a 200mg increase would work better than just a 25mg increase. The next night before bed I took the 400 and nothing happened again, I was still awake the entire night. The third night was the 600mg. I remembered that he told me to drink a lot of water with that dosage because it will dehydrate me. I had so many empty bottles of water someone would have thought I was crazy. Maybe 4 hours after taken the medicine I felt weird as if I was about to just die away. I tried to get up and I couldn’t.

My vision was blurry, and I had no energy. I thought that my blood pressure was high, so I tried to get it. It was upstairs in my bedroom. I could not walk up the stairs normally, so I crawled. Upon making it to my bedroom, I stumbled over everything even air. Then I began to burn up. I felt like my body had been set on fire. I knew that the only place that was cool was the washroom because it had cold concrete floors. As I tried to make my way down to the basement, I honestly do not know how I made it back down. I remember getting into the washroom and falling on the floor. I was somewhat relieved from the burning sensation. I then took my blood pressure and to my surprise it was normal for the first time, but my heart rate was in the 90’s. After that I made my way back to the futon to lay down and I don’t remember anything after that. I woke up sweating and scared for my life. I thought it was a dream until I looked in the washroom and there was the blood pressure monitor. I told my mom what had happened and that I was not taking that medicine anymore. This was the second time I had entered that same dark area and there was the glowing white arm and finger pointing for me to go back.

When I had my next appointment, he said that it should not have done that, and he believed that I was immune to medicines or that my body would metabolize them before they could do their job. He then did not know what to do. He asked me did I want another doctor because he was lost. He thought he knew how to help but it was not working. Instead of him saying the doctor he was going to refer me could possibly help, he told me that she will find me interesting. At this time, he asked my mother to come in to explain to her what was happening. In the mist of him telling her, he then did not know what to say afterwards so he starts telling us old stories making his voice sound appealing while he was doing so. These stories had nothing to do with me or what was going on. I could tell that my mom was irritated, and I could feel her staring at me. After we left his office, she asked me was that how our appointments were going, and I told her that basically. She then told me that she could not take him serious she would not have had him to be her doctor. After that conversation there was this guy, I was supposed to hang out with over in Saint Louis. We were supposed to meet his way and go to dinner. I had been talking to him for some months and I was ready to meet him in person. She then asked all the usual questions and wanted to see a picture of him, and I answered all of them. Suddenly, she was telling me that I could not go. I was already feeling some type of way because of this doctor not being able to help. All I wanted to do was go out hang and get my mind off what was going on. After she said that I just flipped. I was like what is the difference in being in college and doing whatever I want and now having to come home not by choice and now I can’t see who I want to see. She said I don’t trust it all these people going missing, and you want to go hang with some guy. I said to her how else are people supposed to date. Are you never supposed to see them in person after communicating for months?

I could feel my skin boiling but at that point I did not care. It was time for her to see what I was going through in college daily. We had already had the discussion when I came home that it would not be a good idea to have arguments with one another. Of course, we had several but this time since I was already irritated, I did not care. I let myself turn. After that, I have no memory of what happened. All I knew was it was in her best interest to keep her hands to herself until I was aware of my surroundings and could control my actions. A few days went by, and we finally discussed what happened. She told me that I did not look like myself. I had the same face that my uncle would have when he would be intoxicated and violent. She said that I was screaming at her and on the verge of being violent. She said that God knew, and this was also happening while she was driving, that if anything else would have happened we were going to crash. She said I was either going to break my phone, her window or we were going to be fighting. As I was thinking to myself, I was like now you see what happens and why I warned you when I first came home to try to keep arguments down to a minimum if we can. She then said that she would not want to witness that ever again because it scared her. I ended up telling the guy what was going on and he decided not to talk with me because I was not grown enough to be able to come out the house. I just let it go because since I’ve been under my mother’s roof, I was used to hearing things like that from other people.

This was the main reason I was happy in college being independent. I could make my own decisions. It was not like I was not able to judge a situation. I was pretty good at the mama did not raise a dummy thing. I just wanted her to see the difference of not worrying about me miles away on my own so just because I am home, I do not want to be treated like I’m still a little kid. She said that it was different while I was away. I could not relate because while being away if something did happen, I was not in the area, and you never knew who I was with or had their information. While I am here, I give you all the information, where I am going, phone numbers, and all. I would be more at ease with a child who does that and is close to home. So, after that I said forget trying to date, I’ll just hang with my friends every day or every other day to fill the hole of having to be home and not in school participating in track and field.

Everything was good, and I was somewhat happy until she started not wanting me to go out because she wanted mother daughter time again. I was stunned. I could not figure out why she wanted me home so much when if I was in school, I would not be here at all. Everything was bad all over again. I did not want to be here. I just felt like after being on my own for the year, I just did not want to be under my mom anymore. Then to, I had never been a homebody and she knew this. The next day I called my grandmother to get that conversation off my chest about how she wanted me to stay home. Granny understood where I was coming from and said that she would talk to my mother about it, but she also knew how my mother was about certain situations. That was basically the end of that entire discussion. So, I thought.

The time had come, and I was now able to be a certified home health care aide for my great grands. It took a while longer than I thought because of the number of doctor appointments I had. At the time I was going to oncology and the stomach specialist. After everything was in place, I started working for my great grandparents. Making sure they were up and being dressed and fed properly. Everything was going well as the days went by. The money I was making, I was able to pay my school bill myself. Since months had gone by and I had not paid anything on the bill because I thought mama had it, the bill was up to $900. Once I cleared that debt, I felt pretty good about being able to take care of it on my own. I then pulled together every bill that was in my name that needed to be paid off. I did not care if it was at the collection’s office or at the Credit Bureau. Once I had them all together, I started taking care of them one by one. I remember I had eight bills to be paid. In the middle of trying to work and take care of my bills, I took care of the small ones first. Those were the ones that weren’t over 500. That was basically all of them except for one. After that I had an ambulance bill that was 591. I wanted to hurry up and get that paid so I asked my grandmother for 200 to help me pay and I would give it back to her the next week I got paid and I did so.

Then I was down to pay all my medical bills one by one equaling a little over $3000. During this time working with granny and grandpa was the highlight of my storm. There was never a day that I wouldn’t jump for them. From working for them through the company, spending time with them after that time, taking care of them through the nights, going home for a couple hours of sleep to be right back there for them. My bond with them was so strong just because of how I grew up with them taking care of me. It was no problem to take care of them in their older age no matter what I was mentally, physically, and emotionally going through, they were my priority. I loved every single moment, and no one could tell me otherwise and when I say no one, I mean it from my heart not even their own kids could overlap me. I know you may be thinking how that works. I pick and choose my battles and I would forever go to war for those two if it was something that wasn’t in their best interest. With my advance knowledge on health care, geriatrics, my training, or even just common sense, I was not having it. There were times when my granny would look me in my eyes and say, “How dare you argue with me about my mother?” I believed that she failed to realize that her mother was the same mother I had. So, I felt as I had every right to express my concerns and I did. Until this day you will not hear me apologize for nothing when it came to telling the actual truth because one thing is for sure, when you have an emotional connection to people in your lives who have saved you, kept you, cared for you, laughed with you, I mean I spent all my days walking down the street to my great grannies house when we moved from her house, eager to see those purple jogging pants at the end of the street. I kid you not, I did not care about nothing outside of what was best for my great grands. I just felt some type of way and I don’t blame that on my inability to control my emotions. They held my heart in ways that are unexplainable and I ran with that and will run with that forever! I treasure them like my life literally depended on it and that’s deeper than they could ever see.

As my days became longer and my night seemed to not exist, I was battling so much that I decided that maybe I should have kids. With the illness that I have, I knew that I could tolerate the infant stages. I was thinking that if my illness were to get worse as I aged, I would be able to handle kids who are older than the baby stage. I talked it out with my family, and they agreed. So, I was on my search to figure out who was to be the father. There were a few of my past exs that I asked and a few close friends. I didn’t think they all would say yes but apparently l’m a great woman so none of them would have minded having a baby with me.

After a couple weeks of trying to see who I would finally pick, my first love, Thomas was my top choice. However, I wanted to be his one and only anyway, so I was gained for the experience. One man who would finally get to have all of me in terms of still being a virgin. So, I talked it over with him and he was hyped for it. But maybe a little too hyped. I had a day that I wanted to do the whole process. When that day came it just wasn’t right. My body rejected him hard. I was not aroused by his actions. I had never experienced that type of rejection with him at all. After a while I was like, “I’m okay. We can try another day with taking my virginity.” He was okay with that. But, over the next few days he was constantly asking me when we could have a baby. Every time he was free, he just asked so much that I literally blew up and decided that I didn’t even want to talk to him at all. I just felt like I wasn’t going to get what I initially wanted with dating him on and off for 7 years and having his child would have possibly been a reminder of that. Don’t get me wrong, he is a great father to his kids. I just wanted to marry him in addition to having children by him. But I also must really understand my worth. Yes, he would provide, but after so many times of this man putting other women before me, I had to realize. He thought they had his best interest. So, I concluded that he doesn’t deserve to have my virginity or even bare kids with me. I am better than that and God knows, and I left the situation in hopes for better. Maybe after this, I will really get with someone who is for me while also seeking what’s really going on with me.

Almost a month later an old friend tried to video chat me on one of my social medias. It was extremely random because out of the 6 years we had been friends, we’ve never talked on the phone or been around one another in person. I ended up missing the call because I was sleep. Due to the vibration I looked to see why, and I instantly went to the bathroom to wash my face and prepare myself for the video chat. Once we were on the phone it was like we had been best friends for a lifetime. The conversation went on and on. There was not a time that we didn’t have anything to discuss. She began to tell me some of her deepest secrets and how she had to overcome the many trials in her life. Later in the conversation we decided that we would finally spend a weekend together to see how it would go.

Ezra was having a bit of trouble with her car, but she managed to make it to me later in the evening on Feb 3rd. Our plans consisted of going over to my friends’ groups bday celebration. It was held in another city about 25 mins away. She was hesitant on taking her car due to the issues, but I already knew my mother wasn’t going to let me drive so we went for it. The first half of the trip, her car would not go over 45 miles per hour which was a bit scary considering we were taking the highway. Suddenly on a dark stretch of the highway she proceeded to pull over and turn off the car. For a long split second, I thought this was about to go south, and she was about to kill me or something. However, she explained that sometimes she must let her car rest for a minute, start it back up, and it will drive normally. My guard was up the entire time, but it checked out and we were back rolling down the highway at the correct speed. Once we were at the party, it was cool. Not long an old friend of mine, who was upset that I didn’t decide to date her next in high school, did not stay long. I was concerned with why she had her boyfriend at the all-girls party. I wondered why she left, but I felt as though she may have felt some type of way seeing me again. As the night went on, we were lit. Ezra decided to order pizza for everyone. I was shocked that she offered, especially since she was new. Once the party was over, we laughed and talked the entire way back home. She was extremely comfortable around me, so she had a night gown as her sleepwear.

The next day was good, and we decided that the next time we hung, she would pick me up to spend time at her shared apartment with two of her best friends. If they were okay with me spending a weekend there, I was down to hang. We talked every day and normally would stay on the phone between 1-15 maybe even more hours just enjoying each other’s company. The days went by super quick and the very next weekend I was packing my clothes to head out with her. I was surprised that her friends tagged along with her to meet me. I was extremely nervous being the youngest since our age differences were a bit apart and her friends were older than her. However, the vibe which one of her friends was not settling well with my spirit and I just couldn’t knock the feeling. She was in the back seat with me, and she thought it was cute that my face was red as if it was because I was nervous, but it was because she was somewhat making me sick. Once we made it to the store, I was able to get some fresh air and my symptoms relaxed being away from her friend. The weekend overall was lovely. I decided that maybe this was my next move despite all the letters I wrote to God about not going down this road with women.

Around Valentine’s Day, Ezra decided she was going to leave her previous relationship all together. She had just had a series of episodes and she just wanted to escape. At this time, she could only explain her illness, but she did not have a name. She was also treated wrong inside of healthcare and with the law. She had no intentions of being seen again. However, I didn’t want her to be sad, I felt like we could get through whatever was happening. It was like we shared a deeper impact from our mental health, so we connected. As she was crying to me, she explained that her episodes get worse when she’s in relationships. She explained how a lot of the time she just wanted to be alone. I felt as though if she wanted to get better, we could work on that and get the help that she needed. She was still unbothered by my attempts to keep us going. So, she started to get dressed and had another episode. When she jumped to her past self, she immediately started to put on the rest of her clothes to make an escape. She no longer knew where she was, or who I was. Suddenly, she tried to charge me, and I grabbed her arm and she hit herself in the face. I didn’t realize how bad it was until she was really trying to wrestle. After she came back to the present and realized that she was already dressed, she immediately ran out to her car to just leave. I ran after her and she locked herself in the car. I had the saddest puppy dog eyes filled with tears, and I wanted to make everything better. She started her car and proceeded to back up. Once she hit the street, I thought she was going to leave but her wheel wouldn’t allow her to turn in either direction. She could only drive straight back and pull straight forward. It was crazy. When she pulled back into the driveway, she had a breakdown and it looked like a movie scene when the woman is in the car screaming and hitting the steering wheel. This was all because she really wanted to be with me to, but she didn’t want to put me through having to deal with her illness. She wouldn’t open the door so we could talk, but she tried several times thereafter to drive back to her apartment. All attempts failed. Her wheels would not allow her to turn in either direction, so she pulled back in and gave up. She finally opened the door. I asked for one more time to just openly communicate about how I felt. We ended up getting into my car and heading to our go-to 24-hour breakfast spot.

I assumed the waitress understood that there was tension. Both of our eyes were red and puffy from crying. She made us delicious shakes on the house. That was sweet of her. The kicker though, she didn’t know who I was, but she was my first lover’s ex, and Ezra and I had a kick out of that. In our conversation, I laid out all my cards in hopes that she would continue to be with me. But even at the end of the night, she just said she would think about it, but she stayed all night with me. The very next morning, I got up to head to my great grandparent’s home for work and when she eventually gathered herself to leave, her car was functioning fine. She then proceeded to call me a witch because there was no way that car was suddenly fixed and never did it again. She rode down to the house and said that she still had some thinking to do, but she was going to come back. My heart was at ease, but I was still under the impression that she wasn’t going to return. However, she did, and we rolled with the punches. A couple weeks later when she was sick, she was really trying to charge at me, and I almost had an episode myself. I’m not going to lie because it was scary. She was not harming me or stronger than me in anyway, but she was pushing my back into the doorknob which was inflicting pain. I felt it and I immediately switched positions to get away from the door and somehow, I tripped, and she got on top of me like she was going to attempt to choke me. Suddenly, she looked down at me and said, “Why are you so cute?” I responded, “Well, we are in a relationship so, I would assure, you would know how to pick ‘em.” She then asked for my name and realized I was the same person who was trying to talk to her in my mid-teens and after that she was embarrassed. I explained that I knew all her secrets and hinted at some of the ones she had told no one. She was confused and said that I must be special to know those things and we weren’t together that long. After that, not much really happened for the time being. I spent a lot of my time at the apartment with her helping when I could, and she would bring me back across the water for work.

Near the end of the next month, the Monday morning before my birthday, it was gloomy out. We were on our way to drop me off at work and not long after we got on the highway, I was like dang! I left my phone. We were contemplating if we were going to go back to get it, but I felt as though I really didn’t need it. But something kept telling me to tell her to get off the highway and I was fighting it hard. As soon as we were passing the last exit to her apartment, I said to myself, “I don’t need it.” Shortly after, I noticed the front of the car turning a bit. I was getting ready to tell Ezra that something wasn’t right and Boom! Boom! Boom! We had hydroplaned into the median barriers on the highway. The car was an older model Cadillac, so I thank God it was way more durable than some of the newer cars. Luckily, we were both fine and coincidently there were no cars around us or really on the highway. That was extremely strange considering there were multiple cars when I was contemplating getting my phone because of typical morning traffic. So, we just kept going down the highway until we saw the next exit. We were by a mall, so we pulled on the lot to see the damage. The lot security came over in the rain to see if we were alright and we said that we were. I ended up telling my mother what happened after I made it to work, and she was furious. She said that she did not want me over there and that it was in my best interest to come back home to stay with her. I really didn’t want to, just because hydroplaning happens sometimes. It’s not like we were speeding or anything, it just happened, but she was adamant on that decision. The next day was my birthday, and it was cool being around the family and all, but it wasn’t what I wanted for a 21st birthday. It was nowhere near how I envisioned it. With my health as it was, I just didn’t have the energy to enjoy it, so it came to pass just as my life through my very eyes.

For the next couple days, we were discussing what my auntie Winnie wanted to do. She is getting older, and she wanted to have another family celebration or as she called it, a party with all the great food. Of course, we were all in for it. What she wanted; she could surely have. At the beginning of the month, I was ready to head up to the house as usual. I had Ezra with me for a day a fun and celebration. The month before she had just turned 98. So, this was just another day of celebration with literally all the family on their way. As I arrived, no one was there just yet because they were still getting things from the store. Ezra and I decided to just enjoy the weather outside until they all arrived. We were just talking, laughing, and joking. After a while, I received word that everyone was in route to the house. Then suddenly, my aunt came running out the house screaming my name and saying that she thinks that my aunt has passed away. I’m like, “What in the world is going on!” I am once again in disbelief and here we are again getting hit with another big loss. I remember my aunt saying that she was concerned about what she was going to do. She was saying that my aunt was literally leaving this place to arrive at the gates to meet our other loved ones. It was all just too much and just a rough day. To tell the truth, my aunt knew when she was going to depart from this earth. She was loving, goofy, caring and she loved to joke around. It still baffles me that she wanted the entire family to be present, and she stayed to make sure everyone was there before she really took her last breath. Even though she was down prior to that moment, she knew what she was doing. But the kicker to this occasion is that my aunt decided to have this great celebration as well as great departure on April 1st.

 After the nurses came to take care of my aunt, and to do what they needed to do with her body, the funeral home came to take her away. It was as if she wanted everyone to be together when she departed, we would have one another, and I guess food to help. After she was gone, that’s literally all that we had. I ended up leaving to get ice cream and fries with Ezra just to calm down. Ezra was having a hard time processing my aunt’s death, so when we pulled back up to the house from our run, she had a mini episode. I made sure that she was alright and had the rundown of what happened. It was no time at all to do so and we proceeded to enter the house and continued to be with the family.

As the days went by, it was time once again to prepare for another funeral. Everyone had their part in the program, and I was gifted with coming up with a poem that best represented my relationship with her. I had already told them that I would not be strong enough to read it myself, so my aunt volunteered to do it for me. Once we were there, in the moment, she looked so beautiful. My mother said, “I think I can see her without crying.” The vibe in the church was just beautiful. However, just as I felt about my great grandparents, though it wasn’t as intense, she was still another one of my roll buddy’s close to my heart. I spent a lot of my time surrounded by the old folks growing up and they showed and shared with me valuable lessons and ways of loving, giving, protecting, and most importantly being yourself. So, I was bawling my eyes out in silence. When it was time for my auntie to read my poem, she insisted that I stand. I didn’t want to. My words speak within me, and even to hear them, brings out a power that is undescribed. As soon as she read the first word, “You”, in my poem, it was like every laugh, every moment, every conversation, every sandwich, every cookie, every meal of cornbread, milk and sugar rushed into my memories, and I just couldn’t stand. All the emotions that I was trying to trap to be strong until she finished the poem just didn’t exist. My heart was signaling that I needed to let it out! My brain was letting me know that I can be vulnerable because I was around all my loved ones who would help. There is absolutely no need to be strong right now. So, here’s the poem that she read:

The Greatest Aunt Poem

You would look into my eyes and say how big they would be

I would look back into yours and see this

Sweet, Sweet, Sweet Lady who meant everything to me

More love than the world could offer

You inspired me

To be great, understanding, and appreciative

And not to forget how to save all the money

As a child every visit was something special

As if it was the house of Sweets with no boundaries of how much to eat

You used to tell how you had sweet teeth

That one really rubbed off on me

I remember eating so many chocolate chip cookies

Sometimes I would have to refill the cookie jar because that’s just how many I would eat

And I’ll never forget asking for the jelly filled doughnuts that would be the highlight of the treats

How you were the first to show me that milk, cornbread, and sugar was really a thing

Not only do I remember the house of Sweets but the competitiveness between you and great granny

How for birthdays you would ask how much she gave me

So, you could give me just a little sum sum more because I was the Big Baby

No matter what I needed one call away was how I was treated

You had my back and made sure I knew it

The love was strong Never Indifferent

I hate to see that you are no longer with me to share the laughs of growing up and not really being big baby

But you will always be in my heart no matter what

My idol forever

Every day I’ll continue to love you more and more

Your great great great niece

Big Baby

In my relationship with Ezra, she was ready for the next level of a relationship, and I was ready as well. I had always dreamed of being married but I also had the thought that if I married early, I wouldn’t have to worry about people only wanting to be with me for my money because I would still be with the person who was with me when there was nothing. So, after a while Ezra proposed to me. It wasn’t all special and romantic, but it was genuine for her. I accepted and then immediately sent it to my mother that I was engaged. My mother was not happy about that decision at all. She literally texted back that I needed to tell my family because what was she going to do with that information. I remember thinking you can do as you please with that information but at that time I am engaged. This is supposed to be a very happy moment but not so much from my parent. Shortly after the proposal, Ezra was into it with one of her roommates, who I believe was extremely jealous of her and wanted to control what she was doing. I felt as though she did not like that, I was occupying Ezra’s time, she just wanted to find so many different things to prove as what she thought would be evidence in proving to the other roommate that Ezra was not being truthful about the money she was making. However, everything was blown up in her face and she looked stupid for everything that she accused her of. But, from my perspective and understanding, Ezra had proven mental health issues but at times both roommates would think that she was lying about what was going on. If I could tell you all what she had, you all would flip off those accusations, but we made it happen. She threw a huge fit that she was going to move out and she didn’t care what they were going to do about rent. This put Ezra’s other roommate in a crunch just because Ezra was already paying the least amount of rent and for her to move out would put even more of a strain on the need for money. I then gave as much as I could until the lease was either done or broken.

I explain to my mother what was happening and though she was not happy about our decision, she allowed me and Ezra to move in with her, until we were able to get our own place. I felt like this was a great opportunity for mom to maybe see what I saw and that she would change her mind about our decision to tie the knot. But three people under the same house with severe mental health issues didn’t quite work in our favor. It created a plague, literally. My mother was so bothered by her health issues and scared, she went on rants to the family about her opinions and literally created issues between everyone before we could get a chance to have a conversation. There was a one-sided view and no one and I mean no one besides the peacekeeper, granny, inquired about wat was going on. No one even asked why I chose to be engaged to Ezra, how our relationship was like, or even her significance in my life. But I tried my best to keep it moving forward in hopes that my days would get better.

We then made it to our first holiday. Easter was held at my great grand-parents’ home. We were all were ready to head down. Once we got into the house everything was fine. We spoke my great grandparents and headed into the kitchen where my uncle, granny, and aunt were. As soon as my uncle recognized that Ezra was in the kitchen, he started complaining about how hot he was. I looked at him and I could see the sweat on his arm, so I went to turn the air up. He just kept complaining about it being hot and that he was just about to go. He has never acted that way ever. He went in the dining room and grandpa asked him to say the prayer. He looked at him with disgust and he proceeded towards the door. Granny went out to talk to him to see what was wrong and I was concerned because he just stormed out. When she came back in, she talked to my mom, and I still wanted to know what was wrong. Thirty minutes after, of me asking what was wrong, my mother said that the reason he stormed out was because Ezra was there. I looked at her and I was hurt. I could not understand how a grown man could act so foolish just because she was there. She hadn’t done a thing to him. I did not enjoy the remainder of the time there because it just felt like nothing was good anymore. Like my happiness did not exist but I needed to make everyone else comfortable.

May 9-26, 2017, I believe at this point I so desperately tried to escape my very own existence and I just wanted to be back at my chosen college. I know that I operate a lot of the times off impulse, but I reached out to my coach because I desperately wanted to be back there. He was ready for my return and the school was supposed to reach out with my paperwork and a few processes had to be done to get me back eligible. However, no one reached out and a few weeks later when he got back in touch with me my mental capacity had shut down once again. He was still trying to save room for my return if my health was good enough. I just could not for the life of me get it together. It was like no matter what, I was lost in a body that I no longer knew.

May 22-24, 2017

My aunt Ms. Sanders put a little bug in my ear about her not having any of my art. I set out to change that. I personally made her a painting that I thought she would like and that I could sell to her. I did not want her to feel left out because my granny already had a lot of my paintings that I sold to her. After I finished it, I sent it to her. We had a family gathering, in which I would be able to give her the painting and give granny the paintings she paid for. When she saw it, she said that she liked it. Then she did not like the background color because she wanted it to match with her upstairs décor and not downstairs. I was then upset about it because I had personally made it for her. I did not think it had to match her décor. It’s a piece of me to you. So, another family member ended up wanting that one and I made a duplicate. This was hard on me considering I don’t have the gift of repainting duplicates. I only wanted to produce one original of everything. I went on head and did it anyway in the color of her choice for the background. Once I had finished it, I texted her and told her that it was done. And it will be ready tomorrow along with the price. She messaged me back saying that she would not have the money tomorrow which was fine with me. I responded saying, “Oh okay, let me know when you will, so I can make sure I have it with me. I already knew that it was going to be a problem because she did not respond back to me. At the time I was next to my mom, and I already told her that I had to see her tomorrow while I was at work. My mom said that she was not going to say anything about it, but I knew she was going to. The next day arrived, and I headed down to work at my great grand-parent’s home. I almost thought that my mom was going to be right but as I was sweeping up the living room, the conversation began. She asked me why I would not let her have the painting and she pays me after. I told her that I wanted to run my business the correct way. Even if it was family, I just want to make the transactions all at the same time. She instantly said, “As much as I do for you. I thought that we were better than that.” I knew she was going to go there. I immediately explained to her that granny has also done it as one transaction so what makes you any different. She cut me off and said that we were not talking about her. In my head, I was furious, this is my business and I choose to run it the correct way. There are no exceptions or favorites. No one can change me on that. But for some of the off the record experiences I’ve had, just didn’t make sense. I kept my peace and walked out the room to continue doing my job. As I was sweeping, she kept going on with the conversation bringing up old events where she has helped but the only reason why she was even involved in those times was because granny could not help me with all that I needed done. I could feel myself changing and I began to sweep harder and harder. The broom was on his last stand, and I remember looking at the mirror and I just wanted to smash it.

Suddenly, she stopped talking. I put the broom down, but I noticed that I was biting down on my teeth so hard that my jaws were sore. I could not wait until after my shift to tell my mom that my aunt went there. Towards the end of my shift, she was petty. I was in the kitchen washing the rest of the dishes and preparing dinner. She was sitting right next to the door and the bell rang. The main door was open, but the screen door was locked. It was my great grandpa’s friend. He was coming to visit. Instead of her reaching over to unlock the door or just standing up to do so, she called for me to open the door. My grandpa’s friend saw and heard her and was trying to tell her who he was. I gave her the dirtiest look as I walked past her to open the door. She was right there. There was no need for me to have had to open anything while I was trying to make sure all my duties were up before my shift was over. The next day, I found out that the night the messages were exchanged about the painting, she had a conversation with my grandmother asking her about me not giving her the painting before she paid. My grandmother had told her that I had not said anything wrong and that she had paid at the same time she received her paintings. I was so pissed because if you had that conversation with my grandmother after our messages were exchanged then why in the Hell did you try to make me feel bad the next day about not doing that for you. All of that was pointless. That same day she messaged me saying that she would have the money, so I made sure it was ready. It really put me in a space of not wanting her to have any more paintings from me.

In June and July 2017, time had stood still once again! I decided to switch jobs to earn more money and to work for my great grands outside of that time. I was working at a warehouse for a meat company that my first love told me about. They were hiring but I didn’t know he was really getting me a job to work with him. It was good to see him but the constant passes to me after I told him I was engaged was a bit much. He was ultimately hurt in my decision to get married. But I will never understand how a woman can be dedicated to a man through his ups and downs while he constantly picks other women. It is like when a woman moves on, the man thinks that she will always, no matter what, be available to him. Like no matter what he has done to mentally destroy her, she will be right there. He would always speak on how he was going to marry me and that I just needed to give him time. Remind you all the age difference between us. Like what time? He literally ran out of time. I gave him 7 years of unlimited time and I was tired. But we were able to work together regardless of how he felt. Ezra made sure that she came to my job with lunch to let him know that she was the one. She was clear that he needed to find him some business. It was cool to have her bring me lunch that she had prepared. She was a great chef. It was seriously love in those meals. After a while, I began to get sick to the point where I could no longer physically move to make it to that job. I ended up having to quit and I tried to start over somewhere else.

Great granny and grandpa had been back and forth out of the hospital and nursing home. Mostly for mini strokes, but they were strong! By this time, they were no longer utilizing the home health agency but when they were home, I would still take care of them when I could. No matter what, I still got my time with both. I remember a few conversations I would have with grandpa about business and pertaining to their home. He was shocked that I would have wanted to take on their home. He explained how he didn’t know how much I wanted it and what it meant to me. There was never a day that went by that they were not on my mind. While they were in the care of the hospital or the nursing home, I was there. We all would visit them, but it would break my heart when great granny would lean on me hard because she would want me to take her home. She did not want to be in the nursing home. Great grandpa had a bad experience when he was at the nursing home, and he said that he would never go back to a nursing home ever. I’m not sure when, but when grandpa was still living at home while great granny was in a facility, we would take turns taking care of him. My auntie was taking care of him one morning and papa kind of went back on her on the bed like he was losing conscious, and he slid down to the floor. She was so distraught that grandpa was getting ready to depart from this world, she flew down to us for help. We immediately went down to assist. Grandpa was conscious and aware of what was going on. He had thrown up a little, so I cleaned up everything that was on the floor, and I cleaned him up as well. While my mother and I were attending to him, my aunt had already reached out to 911 so they were in route.

The killing part of the EMS people was not that it was two women on call to assist, but it was that my mother had to direct those licensed individuals in how to get my grandfather off the floor and transfer him onto the stretcher. I couldn’t believe that this was what people in serious emergencies had to rely on. However, I just knew that grandpa was going to be fine. Maybe he was dehydrated, or something was a little off. He was a strong fighter, him, and granny. Sad to say when grandpa went to the hospital, he never came out. We knew that he meant that he was never going back to the nursing home, and surely, he drifted on out. As a family we wanted him to come back, but on July 17, 2017, he was gone. Grandpa had left this earth and as a family, we hadn’t had time to heal from the previous passing’s of our family members and now another gem had left us. My heart just couldn’t take it and I leaned even more on Ezra, I just needed her, and she was there. Even though we were still dealing with her mental issues, as well as mine, she was there. Here we were again with another funeral. I don’t know if I was all out of emotions or if grandpa just looked too good that there was no crying at this funeral. But honestly, grandaddy looked good! The only thing that I wish I could have done for him before he left was, he wanted me to paint him a picture of one of his properties and I had never been there to do so. I let it slip away from me and now it was too late. But the history and legacy that grandpa instilled in all of us will never die. We are all living in his truth and his vision that he had for his family. The memories and stories will never end at the day he passed away, and that is a fact!

Time after the funeral, Ezra and I had plans to marry in August which was a tradition in my family. Imagine a switch in the worst parent becoming the most supportive and the best parent becoming an all-around stressor. Life was not looking good. Getting married should have been a highlight. My father supported my decision and showed genuine concern for it. My mother and the rest of the family were absent. My happiest day was approaching and the only people there to support me were my friends. Despite my absent family, my wedding was still amazing. The support from my friends as well as Ezra’s, showed me a lot! The judge said that she hadn’t seen too many couples get married with the type of energy that we had, and she hoped that she wouldn’t see us back to get a divorce. Though my mother didn’t support by physically being there, she did buy us a room to celebrate before and after. I guess that was pretty good. I felt, as I lived through some of the biggest moments of my life with my mother, somehow those moments turned into my biggest traumas. I just couldn’t seem to be able to heal. Just when I felt like I’ve made improvements, my mother would hit me with atomic bombs, and I’d slowly wither away. But we tied the knot anyway Aug 1st, 2017. Yes, prior to, we had discussed extremely important aspects that revolved around marriage and after we agreed that with the type of health issues we had, open communication was a must. I felt as though we would be strong to make it through and if we needed help with our issues, we would be able to seek it. It was the perfect toxic mental relationship. Full of hopes, art, passions, and strength to move forward with a little tussle.

After Ezra and I had our mini honeymoon, my family and I headed off to our family reunion in Atlanta, GA. It was a pretty good time to relax and reflect on our members who had passed. Being around all the cousins showed how everyone was following in the footsteps of my great grandfather and surely what he instilled in us to be entrepreneurs. We were to, “Get something for ourselves” and “Keep the family and God close.” All of which had been on my heart. Yet, all of which I couldn’t achieve. I couldn’t stay healthy enough to keep a job, let alone, get anything for myself. A lot of the time, I was battling with my faith and, “my family,” I just don’t know. But what bothered me most was the part of having to be dependent and have people throw it in my face as if my health wasn’t a factor. It was a loophole of Hell on earth.

A few days after we got back from the family reunion on Aug.10, I wanted to do my sister a solid and watch my niece and nephew. She and her husband, who were also newlyweds, deserved a break. I had already planned for my wife to not be around, because I felt like it would have been a problem though my sister and her husband were gamed for me keeping them. On Aug.11th 2017 at 10:06am, my sister sends me a rather lengthy message denying me any form of keeping my niece and nephew. Her exact message read, “Hey sis, I thought about it this morning and low-key I was going back and forth with myself about them going to spend the night with you. It’s not that I don’t trust you, it’s that the decision that you decided to make, I don’t agree with (By getting married to your lady) and I don’t want them in that type of atmosphere. But I love you, I may not agree with some decisions you make but, I will always be here for you. But if you want to come over to see them sometimes, I’m only a call away and you must let me know ahead of time. I don’t mean to put you down or make you feel bad. It’s just that our points of view in how we do certain things are different. I’m not judging you at all. It’s just some things we won’t subject ourselves or our children to. So, they won’t be coming over, but like I said, if you want to see them just give me a ring. Love you ttyl.” That morning I cried my heart out for at least an hour and the impact of her words made me want to end everything. I have never been denied the right to babysit anyone’s child because of who I am as an individual. This situation hit home because this was my sister, half or not, my sister sent me this message.

I was the only sister who reached out to create a bond with her. I made time to come see her as well as invited her into my family. I never singled her out of being my sister. But she had her view on the situation and those are her children, so I respected that. Does that mean I will come visit her and my niece and nephew? “NO!” Will I ever make time to spend with them like I had planned? “NO!” While my other sister was pregnant and I was there in the process of her giving birth to my nephew, I told her and my siblings what happened. They were pissed! Not only about what she said, but all my sisters are either bi-sexual or gay. That means that most of us couldn’t keep our niece and nephew. After that day, we all black balled her out of the siblings. Now that my other nephew was here, I kept him as much as I wanted. My friends’ children were always with me. I was trying to fill in the biggest void of my life that kept growing.

Since that conversation I had with Thomas at 13, kids were all that I wanted. It just so happened that school and track were important once I hit the age of 18. I felt that since I was an only child that the space that was missing in my life was having kids of my own. I have always told myself to make sure that I had more than one, so they would not grow up like I did longing for close sibling relationships like my friends had with their siblings. Even with watching my mom and her siblings, sometimes I am sad that I didn’t get a chance to have those types of bonds. I mean yes, I do have siblings from my father, but we did not grow up close. Most of which mom was protective and kept me away with assumptions of who lived in their homes. Now that we are all grown and are living in different eras of our lives, it feels like I ran out of time and now to create those bonds seem non-existent.

Moving forward from another harsh trauma brings us to September of 2017, I was still battling with trying to get clarification of my health issues, but none were conclusive. I was in and out of doctors’ offices still and then some days I was making my way to the ER. I remember my migraine was so intense that I couldn’t take it. When I went, they ran the tests that they needed, them administered a medication into my IV to help with my pain. I ended up having a reaction to it and my eyes were blinking so fast it was scary. While my eyes were blinking uncontrollably, I could feel my regular blink. My mother was not pleased with that at all and the nurse in training was freaking out. He had never seen that type of reaction from the medication. My actual nurse was calm and administered another medication that immediately stopped the impulsive blinking. After I was discharged, and it never fails, is when I figure out what they put down in my paperwork as what was happening. On my documents it said that I was at risk for stroke and heart attack and that I was pre diabetic. My question, “Why did they not have this discussion with me before I was discharged?” I knew then how important it was to get copies of the notes as well as reading everything that was in the discharge papers. It is funny how they never explained to me why I was experiencing complicated issues. To be at risk for stroke, heart attack and prediabetes are critical issues to just send me on my way.

After weeks of trying to cope with what was detailed in my discharge paperwork, at least something good was coming up. It was September 27th, my granny’s birthday! I bet she was wondering why she had not heard from me all day. Honestly, I knew I needed to call her, but I then decided to paint, and I lost track of time. As I was on the phone with my mama, she was telling me that granny was feeling some type of way. I hadn’t personally called her to tell her happy birthday. I did post it on Facebook, but she said that she wanted to hear it from me. I was trying to come up with something special from my heart to tell her other than just singing happy birthday. As I was trying to figure something out, it came to me. It went just like this.

Isaiah 43:1-3. But now, this is what the Lord says- he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush, and Saba in your stead.

Psalms 27:1-3. The Lord is my light and my salvation who shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life-of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. Through an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.

On today a great woman of God was born. Just as everyone else was born into sin, through time and time again, you have found your true calling and chose to be on the path of righteousness. I chose two scriptures to depict what I’ve seen in my 20 years of life from you. In Isaiah what stood out to me was the part that says, “I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.” This sets the tone of how I view you. You are strong and confident, yet cautious and understanding. Through mighty storms, you are covered by God and able to bring others out with you. God created a sanctified soul to lead. You have provided in a way that only you know how. Your wisdom has provided a level of understanding for those who lean on you. Your impact in so many lives, including mine, consisting of teaching, molding, and preparing, has drawn out a path in which we have learned how to not be consumed by the flames. You have ultimately strengthened my faith to never underestimate the power of our mighty God.

In scripture two it says, “When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. Through an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.” This scripture hit near and dear to my heart. Out of all the events we’ve endured involving death, from my uncle up until now, you have continued to put all your faith and trust in God. Since you have been deeply rooted in your faith, being in your presence sends signals and chills down spines. I’m not sure exactly how it feels to have to bury a child or even a parent but your strength, faith and how you endured those challenges brought forth a different type of fighter in me. You’ve knocked them down one by one, and I am inspired every day and overwhelmed to know that God blessed me to be a part of this family and to have a grandmother to show me how to do things right in the name of the Lord.

As I was wrapping up her birthday message, I started to reminisce on moments shared looking up to her. In her message I added, “Back then, I did not know much about the impact you gave with your praise dancing. I always heard how powerful you were and how it affected people. I then realized that I really needed to listen and pay attention to the words and your movements. The last praise dance you did to “Awesome”, created an atmosphere that I have never felt before. I knew God was present and working wonders in me. A feeling that I did not know existed. With that being said, “It has truly been an honor to be your grandchild and it will always be. It is crazy because I find myself doing things that you do when it comes to helping others. I realized that I needed to focus less on worrying and putting everything in God’s hands. I then found myself being better as a person. I am starting to understand the purpose of your infamous smile. It just boils down to, once God is the head, things will fall right into place. I just thank you and I ultimately thank God for all that he does. He specifically placed me in your life because he knew I would need you here on earth. You are truly one of his children. So today, we celebrate your birth and I want you to know that you are treasured! Happy Birthday Granny! I love and cherish you dearly. After I sent granny the messaged, she immediately called with teary eyes and appreciation in her words for what I gifted her. It meant a lot that in some way I could still reach the heart of others though my own heart was damaged severely.

 Around the next month, things were somewhat working out in my marriage. Ezra was in the mist of trying to sell her car to get a new one. She was hoping for a same day transaction, but things just don’t always live up to what we plan. She was in contact with a guy who said he was coming to purchase the car that morning. He never showed which put her in a bad situation. Once I found out what was happening, I started to work off my impulses. She needed money to purchase the other car and since he was a no show, she then didn’t have enough money for the sellers. It was around 6 in the morning and her appointment with the sellers was at 9 am. I don’t know why she thought that was a great idea, but I just wanted things to turn out well. For a moment, it seemed like all hope was lost. While she was laying in the bed sobbing, she mentioned how this had been the fourth time she had been stood up to sell her car. As she was on the verge of giving up, I instantly called my grandmother to tell her the situation. I asked her for $700. I had $200 myself to equal up to what she needed. My granny understood the situation and told me she could make it happen if we were able to pay her back. I figured we could because Ezra would then have reliable transportation to get to work. Granny asked for me to take her shift with taking care of great granny so she could go to the bank for the money. We were relieving my aunt so she could get some rest. After about 15-20 minutes, granny called me to tell auntie that I was going to meet her at the bank down the street, so I can hurry up and get back to Ezra and make our way to the next city where the car was. Once I picked up the money, I was rushing to make it they’re on time. I told her to make sure she had the rest of the money and to be at the door when I got back to the house.

Upon arriving on the store lot, we met with a woman and her husband. She was very nice and detailed about the car. Ezra did not tell me that the car needed a fuel pump. When the lady presented us with that information, I was surprised because we just went through a lot to replace the one in her Cadillac. I thought there wasn’t anything wrong with the car. I then asked her if she thought that was a good idea because anything can happen. She said she had it and it was going to get fixed. I was a little on edge with the fact that $700 of this money is my granny’s and I did not want my word to be broken about paying her back in a timely fashion. After that, we test drove the car and it drove smooth, but I still did not feel right about buying the car. She then did a full inspection on the car. Everything seemed to be fine. Ezra then signed the paperwork and gave her the money for the car equaling $1300. As soon as they drove away, and I got in my car, Ezra went to hers and it would not start. She tried and tried, and it wouldn’t catch. I just knew we were fucked.

Now granny was not going to get her money back and we are now ass out of $1300. She called them back and they came to try to start up the car. After several times of trying to start it up, her husband said that the fuel pump had died. She immediately asked us if we wanted to buy the car back. Her husband was trying to get the car to the shop to get the pump fixed but that was all the money we had. We told her we were going to re-sign the car back over to her because we can’t afford that right now. She said that she understood, and she was not like other people who sold crappy cars. She explained how people have done that to her in the past. All I could do was thank God about that entire situation. I just knew something was going to go wrong. Especially after all the paperwork was signed, she could have honestly left the car with us with it being sold as is. She also informed Ezra about the fuel pump so there wasn’t foul play. Once we left the lot with our money returned, we headed back to granny’s house to give her back her money. When we got there, she asked us, where was the car that we were supposed to purchase. We told her it did not leave the parking lot because of the fuel pump dying. We did not get into details about everything that happened because then it would have created a whole new problem that I did not want to get into with my family.

At the end of the month, we just kept getting hit hard with traumatic experiences. On October 27th, Ezra received a call from her job about an incident that happened. She explained the story of how the items were stolen. They then put her on leave with no pay. I thought that it was not fair for them to put her on leave with no pay if she went through protocol for a bag that was sitting out. She explained that the individual who claimed it was theirs, was able to identify all the items inside of the bag. Little did I know, this was only the beginning of the story. I didn’t put too much thought into it. She told me the same story so I figured everything would be fine. I just needed to focus on what was going on with me and a job opportunity. I was super excited to be a part of orientation for a machine operator position. I had been looking forward to this advancement. I was nervous because I was driving 32 minutes to get to the workplace. Before I left, I knew that Ezra had to go to the police station to make her statement about what happened at work. I felt like she would be fine since she told me what had happened, so I went on to do what I had to do. The entire time I was on the road, I was sweating bullets because of my anxiety. Once I pulled onto the parking lot, it was confusing. I saw a couple of women walking and asked if I was at the right building. However, they directed me to the wrong building, so I parked to figure things out. I then revisited my orientation directions and was able to arrive on time. I walked in and was greeted by my boss. I was the first one there. We were then waiting on two more women to come who were also there for orientation. Once they had arrived, we discussed safety in the workplace as well as what we would be doing. We then took a tour around the factory. It seemed slow-paced at first. Then we went around to a faster section in the back where they worked with making seatbelts. As we were concluding the tour, he explained how we would clock in and clock out along with where breaks would be held. Then we were introduced to our supervisor. He seemed like he was nice and understanding. They asked us if we had any questions and if we wanted to start working that night. I was the only person who wanted to start that night. I did not want to be like everyone else, plus that was more money for me. After that I was excited heading home. I could not wait to tell Ezra and the family that I was starting work.

Once I arrived at home, I noticed that mom had gone to her therapy appointment. As I walked in the house, it was weird because Ezra wasn’t at the door to greet me. I figured she might have been sleep. As I opened my bedroom door, she was having an episode on the floor. I instantly picked her up and was trying to see what was going on. All she kept saying was, “I am sorry.” I did not know what was going on and she would not tell me anything else besides that she was sorry. I kept asking her and she said, “All I know is that I lied and now I am going to jail.” At that point I was confused so I started asking her questions to get to the bottom of what was happening. I then told her that she needed to calm down and tell me what was going on. She then explained to me that she was seeing glimpse of what happened at work. She said that she did not want anyone to steal the Xbox, so she put it in the closet. It was only to be in the closet while she was doing her rounds and after she was going to put it back and let the next officer know it was left. All she could remember was bits and pieces of that night and she attempted to put them together. However, because of her mental issues, the pieces did not tell a truthful story. The story she came up with was that there was an Xbox, not behind the desk, but up against the wall. A guy came and was about to take it and she grabbed it and asked him to name what was in it. After he was able to identify the items, she then gave him the bag with the game system in it. Once she told me everything that happened, I told her that she needed to get ready, and we were going back to the police station to straighten up everything that was going on. As we were headed there, she was still apologizing to me and saying that she was still going to jail.

When we got to the police station, I already knew I was going to be nervous because I had never had to do anything of that nature ever in my life. We waited for the officer to come back from his rounds, and we then went into the office to explain to him what was going on. I told her that I would talk because she really did not know what was going on. That is what happens when she has an episode, she jumps back in time maybe three or four years back. I was trying to explain this to the officer, and he seemed as if he understood. I just did not have any medical history to back it up because when she was little the doctors put her on medicine that caused her to have seizures even after she was off it. She never went back since. I also explained that to him. I then told him that the game system was still at the hospital it was just hidden so that no one would steal it. But because she has bad memory and PTSD, sometimes it is hard for her to recall what happened and then she may remember things that never happened at all. He said, “Okay, do you all mind going with us to see if you all’s story checks out?” I told him, “Yes!” There was no doubt that I was willing to do whatever it took to clear her name of taking something that she never did.

Once we arrived at the hospital, I was not allowed to go in. She had forced her-self to remember exactly where it was. All she could recall was the way the doors were made. Since I had been on video chat with her every night on her rounds, I knew what doors she was talking about, but I could not tell them exactly what closet. It did not take them long before they had found the game system, but she came back upset. I asked her what was wrong, and she said that they were yelling at her as soon as the doors closed and telling her that she’s a liar and all this different stuff. The police officer then came up to the car and I asked him did they find it and he said yes. He also said that she was lying and that our story was bullshit. I politely told him, “Sir everyone’s not trying to get over on the police. I know my wife’s situation because this is our reality that we live every day. I am also not lying to you.” He tried to say that he believed me, and I had good intensions, but he did not believe her. I then told him that if she was trying to steal the game system, something that she doesn’t even play, then it would have been long gone, along with her. He said that she did not seem like she had anything wrong with her on camera, therefore, she was perfectly fine. At that point, I wanted to go off on him. Shit, I look like I am perfectly fine too, yet deep down I want to snap your neck, open your chest, and keep your heart as a souvenir. I just wanted the conversation to be over, so I told him not everyone who looks normal is normal. Not everyone wants to live their life not being able to work because of their illness. But I am glad the receptionists Xbox was found. As he walked away, he said that she may or may not have a court date and Ezra started to cry. She said, “This is why I run away from whatever happens with my PTSD because no one will ever believe what is going on.” I told her that everything was going to be alright, but I also needed her to start going to therapy, so she can have some documentation.

Since everything was just overbearing, my mother was at her breaking point of letting Ezra stay in her home. Mama said that she just didn’t feel safe with Ezra jumping back and forth, forgetting important things to do, clogging up the plumbing system, almost killing our 14-year-old Pitbull by forgetting she was outside during a hot day in the summer, and just really giving my mother the impression that she was using me. I figured we had to come up with another way of living. I guess I just had hope. I loved my wife so much despite her hang-ups that I just thought maybe things would be better if we were alone. I took it upon myself to speak with my granny to ask if we could move into my great grandparents’ old home. After having a few meetings with my grandmother about rent, bills, maintenance, and our jobs, we decided that we would move in at the end of the week, November 3rd, 2017. Since the house was big, my granny decided to put us on a four-month trial just to make sure things were taking care of. She gave us an option just in case we decided that the house was too big, and we might have wanted an apartment. I was all in for staying at the house because I had always said that one day the house would be mine. I wanted to carry on the legacy that my grandpa left. I wanted to grow with living deeply in the memories I shared in that home. My plan was to reproduce and share with my kids where it all began. I vowed that it was my mission to keep that house running and in the family. The biggest issue my granny had was that she did not want the house to go to my wife if anything should have happened to me. It was understood until I asked the question that if we decided to have kids, and we updated the home ourselves, would that still be a factor? Then, my mom did not want her to have custody of our children if anything were to happen to me. It was just a big shit show. My marriage was everyone’s marriage. There was a lot to think about in that moment, but I just let it go because too much would have needed to have been discussed and I did not want it to turn into me not getting the house.

As I was packing all my belongings to begin our new journey, my mother and I were discussing what was going to take place. She told me that since I thought that I was grown, I needed to leave the car at her house. Remind you all, I was working, and my job was a little over thirty minutes away and it was also overnights. But I would think that I would be classified as grown, considering I was legally married. I instantly called my grandmother and she said not to take it heavy because I knew how my mother was. But at what point in the black community do we address issues like that? She explained to me that my mother was not going to take the car away from me, especially since she just got a brand-new car. After that discussion died down, I asked her was she going to sell the car to me or have it in my name and she told me no. I asked her why not and she said that since I am married the car will never be in my name because if something were to happen to me Ezra would have rights to that car. I really did not say too much on it because I did not want to start an argument, nor did I want to lose the car all together.

When move out day came, it was cool until mom said she felt like Ezra had an attitude the whole time we were doing so. Deep down I knew she was right, but there was no need to further feed into that subject. I just kept on going. I thought that once we were in our own space, life would be different. We would now have privacy. Seems like I did a lot of thinking, and I was letting reality escape from me. But everything started out fine. We had all our clothes up and out of the way. Since no one had been in the house for a while, I cleaned everything. I rearranged furniture to my liking. I was just waiting on granny to come and remove all the clothes and medicine, so we could have more space for our stuff. She said that she was going to do so but with the death of grandpa happening not long ago, I knew it was possibly too soon to depart from his things. We figured she would eventually. To my surprise, we really did not have any problems, until the refrigerator had a foul odor coming from underneath it. I tried moving it out to see if something was there, but I couldn’t find anything. Mom ended up coming over and she smelled it as well. Then we were also having problems with one of the rooms having a strong urine odor in it. I tried mopping the floor, pouring witch hazel on it, bleach, pine-sol, and nothing seemed to work. My mom said that maybe the odor was coming from the vents because great granny’s pee pot used to sit over it, so I poured fragrances down there to see if that would help. It did not, so after granny and my aunt came down to check out the refrigerator, the odor slightly disappeared. Since they couldn’t figure out where it was coming from within the refrigerator, they swept and mopped behind it. After we moved it back and started to discuss with granny again about getting the old clothes out the house. She said that she would, she just had not had time. We expressed to her that if she did not have time, we would do it for her. We would just need the boxes or bags that she wanted to put the clothes in. She told us no. She reiterated that she was going to do so, and Annie asked her why we couldn’t. She just said that she wanted to do it herself. It became clear that her response was because grandpa had just passed away months before, so she wanted to hold on to his possessions a while longer. I guess I was just rolling with the punches and became accustomed to living out of my totes. I was willing to do whatever to be in my forever home. I just knew that one day I was going to make great granny and grandpa proud in a way that only I could.

After a while, we had another meeting with granny about the upkeep of our home. Since I grew up there and cared for the house, I knew everything that she was talking about. It was just the turning point in being my safe space to live as an adult and with my health issues, a secure place with minimal financial obligations. All we had to pay was our bills. There wasn’t a mortgage to worry about. As granny continued with explaining the upkeep, she expressed what we had to do when it was cold outside, her concern with clogging the plumbing system, and how to equip the house so that we wouldn’t have problems with animals finding their way in search of food. Once everything was squared away, we put down rent and a deposit equaling $900. We thought we had it made. At that rate, even if one of us did not have a job, the other could still pay rent without it being too stressful. It was the perfect plan and things were good with my job. I loved my coworkers, and the workload wasn’t too much to handle. Ezra was still suspended from her job, but she was in the process of trying to find her another one. I then suggested to her the job site that I used, so she could get a gig the same day she applied. However, she still wanted to do a security job, I was fine with that, but I felt like she needed a job that wouldn’t put her in another situation with the law. But mainly, she was set on getting another security job. Then she hit me with a bomb. She had just told me that she was driving, and the street was raised higher than normal, and it scraped under her car. Since then, she had been having some trouble with starting her car, but it would still drive fine. It was too much to process so I just left it alone.

Mid-November, Ezra’s birthday was coming up. I had everything planned out. I knew I was going to be tired, but I was going to try to make it to work afterwards. The morning of her birthday, after I got off work, I came home and cooked her breakfast. We chilled for some time before she went off to do her birthday shopping with her aunt. My baby cousin was at my grandmother’s house, and I had not seen her for some weeks because of my work schedule. I ended up going over there to spend some time with her for maybe an hour or so. My plan after was to get some rest, so I could take Ezra out to her birthday dinner. About an hour after I had been with my baby cousin, Ezra called me to tell me that her car wouldn’t start, and she was on the main street in the city. I was not ready to leave just yet, but I told her that I would be on my way. I just knew that I was not about to get any rest. After I started driving, she called me back and said that her car had started but she did not want to chance it taking it to the mall. Being who I am, I told her to take the car home and I would meet her there. I drove her and her aunt to the mall where we met her best friend and one of his friends. As we searched for her an outfit, we stumbled across two dresses. One was green, and the other was purple. When she sent the purple one to me, I did not like it at all, but the green dressed that I did like, was not her style.

Her aunt bought her the purple dress and her best friend said that he would buy her the green one. As it was getting later and later, I realized that I was pushing it with not getting sleep and trying to go to work that night. However, plans had changed drastically. I instantly became frustrated. I wasn’t aware that I had to take her best friend home. Then her aunts’ girlfriend called her saying that she wanted her to get her something to eat. Remind you all, her aunt is in my car so, who’s stopping to get who something to eat? I did not want to be like that though, so I told Ezra that she was going to have to drive because I could feel the anxiety rising. Once we arrived at the place to get the food, I became stuck in a position where I could not move or speak to tell them that I was not feeling good. Ezra could not tell what was happening because the position that I got stuck in, looked as if I was just reading messages on my phone. By that time, ten to fifteen minutes had gone by. When her aunt came back with the food, I was then able to move, sweating up a storm. We then dropped off her best friend at the metro link. He knew that we were behind time for dinner reservations. When we got to the city, cars were driving crazy on the main street. One car had jumped out in front of us, and another was trying to speed past us while the lanes were coming into one. I told her that we needed to hurry up and get out of that area. Driving down or near state street on a weekend can be dangerous.

When we dropped her aunt off, I felt like all plans were ruined. My body was starting to weaken, and I was now working off almost 24 hours of no sleep. I knew I was going to have to call of work, even if we did not go to dinner. When we got to the house, as I was trying to walk up the ramp to the door, I almost fell over it. My wife knew that I was sick, and she could not do anything but be sad. She knew I was supposed to had been to sleep, but I was out trying to help her. After a while of getting myself together on the couch, she looked at me and asked me if we were still going. I did not answer her because time had really run out to go in the first place. I then told her that we could call in our order and eat it here at the house. She said that she was okay with that, but I could tell that she wasn’t. I told her to go shower and as I was battling with my sickness, I had an idea. I was going to take her to another steakhouse and take her to the one we were supposed to go to another day. As I was getting my outfit together, my shirt that I was going to wear was upstairs on the bed. When I got in the room, I could hear her talking to herself trying to make herself believe that everything was going to be okay. She was saying that we will just go another day. She repeated that I did not feel good and that we were still going to have a good time with just picking up food and coming home. After I heard that, I felt some type of way because I really did want our day to go as planned. It wasn’t my fault that her car decided that it wanted to act up. But another part of me was I deep thought on why she was having a fit and I was the one who had been ass out of sleep etc. It was weird. But I just wanted her to have a good birthday. When she got out the shower, I was putting on clothes. She was just going to put on some regular clothes, but I told her to put on something nice. She asked me why and I told her I was taking her to another steakhouse.

She then told me that I did not have to take her out to a restaurant. She knew I did not feel well, but I was determined to make her birthday be what she wanted it to be. When we got to the restaurant, we had a short wait. For the way the day went, I told her she had to call my boss and supervisor to leave messages saying that I did not feel well. Though I was sluggish, we still had a great time. I did not care about how expensive the meal was, and I let her get her favorite alcoholic drink. I told her that this was not the only thing I had planned for her birthday. I explained that the next day, I needed her to be ready around 11am. She had always told me that she wanted to go to the City Museum, so I made it happen.

The next day, it was like we were big kids all over again. We were crawling around in the tunnels and sliding down the slides. Some tunnels she could not fit in, so I was trying to push her through. Of course, that did not work, so we had to back track or find another way out. We climbed so many stairs just to ride one slide. Halfway up, my old knee injury came back, and I had to seriously catch my breath. While we were there, we were getting hungry, but I knew I had to ration out my money because rent was on me to pay. I did some math and we got us a sandwich and waters. The sandwich that we had was so good! I almost paid to get another one. But, after we had eaten, we walked around for about another hour or so, then, we were ready to go. It was cold that day, all I wanted to do was hurry up and get to the seat warmers in my car. We then picked up something to eat and made our way home. I remember that I had told her that her b-day celebration was still not over, but she had to wait until the weekend. When that day came, we finally got to go to the steakhouse that we had planned to go to on her birthday. We dressed up and she wore the purple dress. We were almost late getting there because we could not find a park. Once we got our food to go, we sat outside in the lounge area. We really enjoyed our time until I was sad. The wind blew the last of my fries, but left just a few on my plate, so I was then content.

After that, we were trying to find something else to do. I could not think of anything especially since I was still under the age limit for clubs. So, we decided to just head home. We were now enjoying each other’s company and I told her that I still had more under my sleeve. I explained that the next adventure would be the next month because I had to take care of bills. She then expressed to me how her birthday gifts were great, but they should end. I told her they were together with her Christmas gifts, so it would continue. She just laughed. The day before rent was paid, I knew that I needed gas with all the extra driving I was doing for her birthday. When I looked in my bank to see how much my check was, I had just enough for rent. There were no extra funds for gas, and I was almost on E. I knew that when I got home, I was going to have to put at least $20 in my tank to hold me over until I was paid again. Now that I used that money from rent for gas, I was now short for the rent. At first, I was worrying because I did not want us to have any problems in our four-month trial with granny. We hadn’t even been there for three days over a month. I then remembered that I had change everywhere.

That morning, I counted my change and I had enough to equal the rest of rent and then some. I went to the bank first to see if they could change it, but they said they would have to send it off to do that. I needed the money that day so, that was not an option. I then remembered that the store did it with no fee for using the coin machine. When we got there and put our coins in, I was excited that everything was going to be good. When we left there, we went to granny’s house to pay rent on time. Now we had given her $1500 on the house with money left over if anything should go wrong. A few days later, granny and I had discussed how much the bills added up. Once we figured out the cost, we said that if we continued to pay what we were paying, we would always have a cushion for a few months until we could get back on our feet. I just knew that we were going to be good. I spoke too soon because my sickness decided to show its ugly face and I was not able to get to work every day. It was as if I was either moving in slow motion or I could not move at all.

But I was able to make it, and I had gained three and a half weeks of doing great work. I believed that I was going to be alright. In the last few days of the month, I recognized that my heart started skipping beats more often and I was having dizzy spells. While all of this was going on, I applied Ezra to a staffing company that was going to hire her the same day. I told her while we were going to her interview to pick a factory that was close to mine, so we would only have to drive one car since her car was not reliable. She really did not like the factory job because it was hard on her body, but she was getting paid close to what she was making being a security guard. I was kind of jealous because she was getting paid way more than me, and she had not done anything as far as assembly work, warehouse, or being a machine operator. At least I had the experience, but we were making good money, so I really did not care. My priority was making sure that the bills were paid and that’s all that I cared about.

When I finally had the chance to tell my story to my new evaluator before they assigned me to a therapist, she honestly told me that I did not need to work. She insisted that I should most likely check myself into a psych ward for further evaluation. I listened to her, but I really did not want to do so. When my next appointment came, the therapist that I was assigned to, told me the same thing. She had me talk to the crisis specialist to choose a hospital and to see what the outcome would be. In the next couple days, I had to speak with the med doctor, so she could do my evaluation for medicine. After she evaluated me, she said that she honestly thought I was bipolar. She prescribed me three medications to help with what she thought was going on. Remember the keyword is thought. Then, she wanted me to get lab work done. She also said that it would not be a good idea to work while starting the medications.

I then told her that I was probably going to check myself into the hospital the next day. She insisted that I should still get the medicine, but the hospital might change the diagnosis. After I left her office, I told my boss that I was going to have to quit because I was going to be admitted into the hospital. He was so sad. I was great at my job even though I had only been there for a little over a month. He said minus the absences I had because of my health; I would have been a great worker when they officially hired me on to that company. There were so many things going on while I was trying to fix me. I really did not know when I was going to go to the hospital because now Ezra’s car had died completely. I was trying to figure out a way to get her to work while I was in the hospital. My mom had said a while ago that if Ezra was on her insurance, then she could drive her car. I did not take it as a joke because no one was laughing at the time this was brought up. So, when I asked mom about it, and Ezra had gone to the bank to give her $100 to be put on the insurance, mom flat out told me that she was playing. Ezra could not drive her car and she was not going to put her on the insurance. Of course, I was frustrated because in the beginning she did not jokingly say that to me. I took it as if anything should happen in the future, we would have that option. Now we don’t and when I go to the hospital, she won’t be able to keep her jobs. At that time, she had three jobs. Even though she was suspended at one, she was still working the factory job, and she had a new security job that was supposed to start that Monday.

After Ezra’s therapy appointment, she now had enough sessions and proof to take up to her job to show that she had severe mental health issues. Once we dropped off the letter to the headquarters, it wasn’t long after that she received a call. It was her boss. The same one who waited until they were behind the hospital doors to yell at her with the police officer about her actions. I was livid. She put him on speaker, and he was apologizing and pulled the sob line of telling her that she was his hero. Like there is nothing he could say to mend what was broken. He basically destroyed her inside. There is so much disconnect for what is perceived as a normal human being and what mental health looks like when you are still living in the world. It was crazy but he ended up offering her another position that was downtown STL. The best part was that she could get there by public transportation. All she had to do was get a certification for the type of position it was by the water. I was grateful that an opportunity had opened in our favor. I was just waiting on her to make the offer complete. She told him that she would call him back with her answer. Once she hung up, I immediately expressed that this was her moment to take on responsibilities while I was away. Once I was back all would be well. I just knew we would be good, and I could be admitted in peace. After a few hours passed, she had called her boss back to decline the position. I did not know until she explained to me later. After I asked her why she would do that knowing that we were in a difficult space, she explained to me that she and her best friend decided that it was not a good enough position. Since the pay dropped a little, she wasn’t going to take it. I was furious! When does a best friend have a right to make big decisions that affect our marriage and why does he have input in the first place? Unless he was going to pay the bills or take her to work, which he has no car, how does that remotely sound like a good plan. I just couldn’t believe what had happened. She allowed someone else to determine her choice that was the turning point in us coming out alright. What the fuck is that shit. I was just over it at that point. I had no choice but to let things take course. She’s a grown woman but surely by her actions she would understand, though she hadn’t realized it yet, that every action she takes, it backfires when she doesn’t listen. If you ever find yourself wondering how you got to such a bad place, first look at the choices and decisions you’ve made. There was always a choice she just so happened to not have those skills to make the right one. She didn’t even attempt to listen to who she married. The last option we had now was just seeing if this last person was going to buy her car. They never showed just like the rest of the people who said they wanted to buy it. Time had run out and I did not know how long I was going to be in the hospital or if I should go. I was calculating that if it was two weeks, I was already pushing into the Christmas holiday. So, Ezra just had to tell her jobs that she was not able to work them due to transportation and how far they were. I ended up going into the hospital the next day and she went off to stay with her mom. It was like we were at the end of the road again trying to figure out how things could work.

Crazy House Dec 12-14, 2017

December 12th, 2017, I went to the emergency room of Barnes Jewish Hospital to see if they could diagnose what was wrong with me and why my body was doing unusual things. After I talked to the nurse and told him that I wanted to be committed, they put an orange band around my arm. They took my blood pressure, and it was 180/100. He then walked me, my mother, and my grandmother down to the evaluation area where we sat for some hours. They gave me clothes that I had to change into. They said that I could keep on my underwear but everything else had to be packed and go home. I looked like I was going to jail. While I was changing a woman had to stand in the door to monitor me change. Once I came out and sat back where mom and granny were, I could tell something was wrong with my mom. I asked her what was wrong, and she said nothing but then she started to cry. The doctors came and asked me what was going on. They then took my blood. After that they brought everyone turkey sandwiches. There was a guy who was just irritated and ready to go. He then started rapping. He was loud and could not sit still. The officer who was patrolling the area constantly had to keep his guard up while he was there. They then ended up discharging him after an hour. There were two other girls who introduced themselves to me.

One girl seemed like she was cool but then she starts saying that one of the nurses use to be her teacher and she was out to get her. The other girl did not say much. Right before we were about to eat, another guy started peeping around the corner. He was staring at me and trying to get my attention. I tried to ignore him, but he then came out with his IV. He spoke to everyone and sat next to my mom. He was really enjoying himself. He was laughing and rapping. Once my mom and grandma left, they all started to rap. The one girl who was telling me about the nurse, told me that I should know what they were talking about in their rapping. She said, “You know what we are talking about, you know the code.” At that point I’m like, “Sorry, I don’t understand you all. I have not been in this type of hospital setting. This is my first and last round.” She thought she knew that I was going to be back. I only came there to receive the proper diagnoses at my own will. I was not there because someone had called on me. I really had the chance to leave that same day, but I wanted to stay a couple days to be properly evaluated. The nurses who were on shift were looking at me like I did not belong there. They all knew I did not want to associate with the other patients, so she offered me a room for privacy. I went to see what the room looked like, and it was a closed room with a stretcher pad on the floor. It almost reminded me of a padded room but no pads. The door was thick and had a small window to where doctors can look in to see what you were doing. I sat in there for about 30 seconds before I came back to sit out in the evaluation room. Then two more people had come through. One was a lady who was at fall risk, and another was a guy who recently cracked his head open, and he had been their multiple times before. I had just signed my papers to confirm that I was voluntarily staying and that I could leave when I was ready.

Thirty minutes after the guy was admitted he started to throw a tantrum and about seven security guards were in the area. The quite girl went off to another ward that was still Barnes Jewish, and the dark-skinned girl had just gone upstairs to her room after she had confessed that her private parts were bothering her because she had herpes. I was the last one standing. They were looking for me a room. After they found out that I could just go upstairs to the 15th floor not one, but two officers and a tech escorted me to the floor. I guess since I was quiet and to my-self, they thought I was the most dangerous especially since I was talking like I had some sense. The route we took was super scary. It was like we were in the basement with the steamy pipes, dim lights, and damped floors. Then we came to a standalone elevator that took us up to the 15th floor. It felt so unreal. There I was, being escorted to the ward in a wheelchair. After I got to the floor, the doctors came and introduced themselves. They also wanted to know what was wrong and the medicines I was taking. I told them that I had the information with me in my belongings, but no one wanted to look in my binder. So, I was trying to remember all the medicines, the names, and dosages of all of them when they could have opened the book. They then took more labs. The nurse stuck me the first time and she missed my vein. She then tried to use the same needle to re-stick me and I told her about herself. She then apologized and got a new one and took my blood. The doctor then tried to see if I had sleep apnea, but I guess I did not because she didn’t disclose that information to me. I tried to see if I could have a private room because I am not good with having roommates. Good thing the girl I was in a room with was quiet and to herself. She was also leaving in the morning. I stayed up for a while talking to some of the other patients. There was a guy there and another girl. They thought they ran the floor. The guy then introduced himself and asked me if I needed anything. The girl wanted me to hang with them and talk but I did not want to associate with them. I was not there to make friends; I was there to see if I could get diagnosed. It didn’t have anything to do with all of us having mental issues, I just wasn’t comfortable being in a lockdown unit with everyone watching and observing.

Dec 13th I finally went to bed at around 8am. The day nurse came to let me know that breakfast was there. After she left, another tech came in to check my blood pressure. It was still high in stage 3 hypertension. I looked at the monitor and under my blood pressure, it showed the pressures of everyone else. Theirs were normal in the range of 120 over 80. After he left, I washed my face and brushed my teeth. Breakfast was good. Since I was not on a diet, I had everything. I did not know how good mixed fruit was until my stay there at the hospital. I had so much fruit and it was delicious. The reason why I hadn’t had fruit is because I grew up being allergic to all of it. After breakfast, a few more doctors came to hear what was wrong. I told them, and they looked puzzled. All they could say was that they knew it was anxiety, but they couldn’t pinpoint what was the cause of everything else. I then met with my social worker who really seemed to be clueless. I told him about track and field that I threw, and he acted like he did not know what shot-put, discus, hammer, and weight was. He wrote on my paper that I host events. I was looking at him sideways every time he came to talk to me. After lunch we had music therapy, he wanted to talk to me as well. I could tell that I was making him uncomfortable because I knew what he was talking about and had a comeback for him. I am no dummy. I am not like the rest of the people in here. You can’t tell me one thing and expect me to just go along with it like I do not know what you are talking about. Same thing with the doctors and prescribing medications, all the medicines that they named I knew what they were and what they were used for. For the simple fact that somebody in the family whether it was my mom or great granny had been on them. They were surprised at how much knowledge I had. That was pretty much how that day went. After that I asked for the shower to be opened, so I could get clean. I would not have had to, but because I was uncomfortable staying there, I was sweating like crazy. Dinner came, and I was really enjoying the food minus being part of the lockdown unit. I then went to sleep. The next morning came, and it was basically the same routine. The tech came in to check my blood pressure. It was still dangerously high. I talked to the doctors, and they prescribed me Lexapro for anxiety and Trazodone for sleep. As the day went on, we had art therapy. I made a Christmas tree with rhinestones and polka dots. The therapist was happy because she said out of all the days she had worked at the hospital; no patient had ever finished a project. After I was finished with the tree, I was tired of being there honestly. I talked back with my doctor, and she said that I could be dismissed the next day. I went back to sleep after that.

When dinner came back around, I only came out my room for the food. As I was eating, the girl who thought she ran the floor called me ugly because I would not associate with her. That bothered me, but I knew that if I flipped on her she would lose her baby and I didn’t know what else would have happened. For the rest of the evening her being in my presence had bothered me. I stayed away from her as much as I could, but she would constantly walk past my door. Once it was time for me to go to sleep another person then became my roommate. They techs and guards were loud as if I was not in the room trying to sleep. Once she was situated, they came to check on her every hour on the hour. I was closest to the door so all the light from the hallway would constantly awaken me. If I did sleep threw them opening the door, they would then turn on the light in the room, so I had no choice but to just stay up. The new girl then apologized to me for waken me up and was telling the doctors to be quiet. So, I could not be mad at her she was polite. I found out that she had chromosomes disease.

Dec14 This was the last day I was staying in the hospital. I woke up and I was on a mission. I ate breakfast and the doctors wanted to talk to me. She wanted to know if I was able to sleep. I expressed to her the situation, and she understood. I then asked her were my labs normal because my Med doctor wanted to know if my potassium and magnesium were normal. She said that they did not see anything that was out of the ordinary. I also asked her could she explain to me why my body was doing what it was doing. She said that she does know that I do have anxiety but as far as why I have the type of anger that I have, and my physical ability is diminishing, her team was clueless. After she told me that, I asked her could I leave there since they did not know what was wrong and she said that I could absolutely be released. I ended up telling my day nurse, but she said just wait a minute before I call home just in case the doctors change their mind or it’s a delay. After I talked to her, my social worker came through to talk to me about being dismissed and he wanted to know if I was alright to leave. He then got in touch with my mom and asked her did I seem like I was okay to come home. He was basing is decision off the phone conversation she had with me. Of course, I was fine. That’s why every doc and nurse I talked to, looked at me as if I did not to be there. I then asked my nurse could I take my shower and get a new pair of cotton underwear.

She unlocked my shower door and my day continued as planned. Around 2pm I had my blood pressure checked and it was still high. It was 135 over 89. There was a concern because my heart rate was 122 and I had been doing nothing at all. I was also hot due to the environment I was in, so my temperature was 99.8. To my surprise, I did not think a person should be discharged with those types of readings. I went back to the room to freshen up. When I came back the music therapist was out playing music. After a rap song was over, he asked me what I wanted to listen to. I instantly said, “Beethoven Flight of the Bumblebee.” He was surprised at what I chose and played it. He was trying to explain to me what it was, but I instantly topped what he said because I knew what it was, and I could interpret it in many ways. One of the other patients came out and said, “What are y’all playing in here? A scary movie?” I instantly laughed. It is kind of sad that the only music they know is rap. Also, being a music therapist, I asked him has he played classical music for them to calm them down instead of just hip hop and R&B. Of course, he said, “No.” After that he wanted to open the discussion about my anger. I told him again that I did not have anything from my childhood that could have interfered with what I am going through now. I do not have anything in my life that could have been considered a trauma. I told him that the only thing it could be is genetics. He tried to go there with me saying that he thinks that it is something deep down that I need to unlock. I told him that it was nothing that I could recall. He kept trying to tell me what he thought but I really did not want to listen to him because he did not know enough of my situation to put his cents in.

However, I knew he was uncomfortable because I was red in the face. Usually when I am mad enough, I will start crying. I was holding it in, so I would not cause a scene. I was determined to leave so all I did was come back with more knowledge to what he thought was wrong until he just looked up my name to see if my paperwork went through to be dismissed. After he left, they had group therapy and the nurse was telling me that I can get points for being involved. I didn’t want to sound rude, but I instantly told her that I did not want to be a part of that plus I was leaving anyway. She was like, “Oh okay.” I then waited until my nurse was off her break and I told her that the music therapist said that my papers were cleared. She told me that I could call my mom and she could get me. Now all I could do was wait until they arrived. I was so happy to see them, and they had my clothes. I remember how quick I went to that room to change out of them jail cell clothes. When I came back from changing clothes all my belongings were ready for me to receive them. When the nurse saw me leaving, she was like dang she really was leaving today. I was adamant on telling them that they would never see me again. We were escorted down to the exit where we then paid for the parking ticket and went on our way to drop granny off at home. As we arrived at her house, my mother was joking about the Christmas tree I made while I was in the hospital. I told her I was not putting it up and granny instantly took it and now it sits above her fireplace in her home. I am not happy with that peace of art because of how it was created but I don’t knock that granny wanted to keep it as well as display it. At least I was home for the holidays. Nothing really went on until it was time to bring in the new year.

New Year’s Disappointment

On Dec 28th, a few days before New Year’s Eve, I was in the car headed to my therapy appointment and my day was well. I did not think that it would turn out the way it did. My mother then looked at me and said, “So, I have something to tell you.” I’m thinking to myself like we have not done anything wrong at this point so what is going on. She said that my uncle told her to let me know that Ezra was not welcome at his house. I could not do anything but burst out in tears because New Years was at his house. I was not going to leave her home while I kick it with the family bringing in the New Year, so I decided not to go. My mom then said if I was not going, she wasn’t because she felt the same but about me not going. Once I got to therapy it took me a minute to straighten up because I did not want to go in there teary eyed. It was so hard to do so because I kept thinking to myself like man, “I can’t just have one day to myself where nothing pops up and is a problem.” I felt like life without a peaceful day was non- existent. After therapy I had arrived home, I really did not want to tell Ezra what had happened, but I knew I needed to get the conversation out the way. As soon as I told her she asked, “Why?” She had not done anything to him. His reason was that she does not sit right with him. It’s just something about her that bothers him. After we had that discussion, we knew that Ezra’s best-friend was hosting an event at his house so that’s where we were going. I told mama that she could go be with the family because we were going to be somewhere. As the day arrived and we were at the event, my mom was not feeling good at all, so she ended up not being able to go anyway. While I was sitting there trying to enjoy myself, all I could think about was that this would be the first year not bringing in the New Year with my own blood. I’m sitting there around people I don’t know. The feeling just got worse and worse as it was time to celebrate bringing in the New Year. I went on Facebook just to type out how I was feeling so that I could screenshot it and keep it in my notes. The post read, “Yes I do feel some type of way bringing in the New Year with people I barely know. This year was supposed to be the end of things that happened in 2017 and the beginning of a clean slate. I want to start a new health journey as well as be wiser spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. It has not been good, and I feel like it won’t ever be. I’ve been battling with myself for a long time, and I am not afraid to say I have low self-esteem. I’ve been bullied, and I never really thought I was cute even though people tell me I am. Then there’s realizing who I am but for the sake of others around me changing who I am, being miserable just so others can sleep at night.”

After that night I began to realize that I must live for myself, and I mattered. Of course, all hell broke loose. Like I don’t know if my family will ever realize what I really go through, but I battle with depression daily to the point where life seems like it’s not worth it. Every single day that I get into my car, I would have loved to crash into something so hard that I could just be with great granny. When things seemed to be okay, my uncle adds to the fire. It’s like your niece, who is finally coming around to being happy living in her own skin and being with someone who genuinely makes her happy, is not allowed to bring her wife to your home for the holiday. Therefore, I am not allowed in your home as well. No one understands what I’m dealing with. Up until this point, no one has even bothered to ask. The past two years with my life being turned around with my health, all I have ever desired was love and support from my family. I’m talking about genuine love and support, not selective support or the I’m going to support you, but your wife is basically non-existent. Even the,” I am going to try to be okay with it, but I am going to continue to let you know that it is a sin, and you must change.” That is granny’s favorite line when we talk. Sometimes it seems like even when I talk to her, there is never just an open granny granddaughter discussion without throwing scriptures and God. Yes, he is important and the head, but at times I just want to talk openly about what’s going on. A lot of the times I just don’t talk because I don’t ever feel like I can release my stress. There isn’t a member I can vent to with the type of understanding I need. If I had the balls, I would end it all now, but I keep reminding myself every second, if I don’t for long, I’ll go crazy, but that greatness will come. I must remember that I will lose some things on the way, but my time is coming. It is just hard to try to believe that I will overcome when the strong support system I have always had, is starting to seem as if it is not there.

Not only have I been manipulated mentally and emotionally but my wife, who has tried to support and push me to be great in my art, writing, and just things in life that I seriously doubt, she is hurting. She must constantly deal with being in love with me but not being a part of my family like she would like to be. It just seems like we are constantly being targeted for being who we are. Even our therapists have a lot to say about the situations we have been involved in. It’s like I just wish I could just put all of them in our shoes and just live our lives with our problems for a week at the max. Then add the same drama from the family onto that and see if they survive. At some points I feel as if my dad supports me more than my own family and he has not been in my life for-real at all. Ultimately if I could disappear and not have contact with anyone, I think I would be fine, and it should never be like that. I continue to live each day with a new plate even if there was mess the day before. All that does is trigger my black out anger. I just fear for those people who have done wrong to me, and my GOD bless those and keep them protected. Honestly speaking, deep down in my heart I have no sympathy saying that death is upon all. Then even deeper down in my soul, I fight within myself because I do not wish that on anyone. At some point in my life, I feel that one day I won’t be able to control my what my flesh desires. As a result, things will happen that I have really been preparing for since my illness came to light. I do not take my feelings lightly, neither should anyone else who has done me wrong for no apparent reason. Always remember if the tables were turned how would you feel (black heart).

Jan 10th, Ezra wanted me to go to a word up event with her, but I had to take care of some family business, so I told her that I would get with her on the next go round. She told me that one of her friends was picking her up, so I was fine since I knew this friend. Once she was gone, I was on my way home, and I was waiting on her to return from her event. I asked her was she enjoying herself and she said that she was. As she was on her way home after the event one of her new friends brought her, but she had called me. Once the phone rang, I could hear her discussing our relationship problems and I did not appreciate it because not everyone needs to know our problems even if they are telling you their own. Later that night, I was being nosey and wanted to see what she had been talking about to people. I noticed that she had been talking to a guy she used to just casually have sex with, so I read their messages first. I was stunned at what I read. He asked if she wanted to chill. She said sure, I just got home. He asked for the address, and she gave it to him. He then said that he was on his way in a few minutes. At about 3 am I confronted her about this young man being in my house without my knowledge and all she told me was that he was only in the living room for about ten minutes then he took her to the event. She then went back to sleep. Later that day once she had officially woken up, I asked her about it again and she told me why. I was confused as to why she did not give me any type of heads up knowing their history. She said she did not think it was that serious.

I told her that since we are married, there are things that need to be discussed especially when it comes to anybody that she has had sexual relations within the past. Then he was in my house. She then explained to me that her ride cancelled on her at the last minute, and she knew that he was going the same way. I told her that she just needed to communicate with me about things that are going on especially who is in the house when I am not there. She agreed that she should have let me know the situation. I was still upset that he knew my address and had been in the house no matter if nothing happened at all. At that point some of the trust I had kind of left because I felt like boundaries were crossed. I tried to let it go but it still bothered me from time to time. She then tried to get mad at me for something that she already knew was going on. While we were dating, we both had dating pages that we would occasionally get on a share the different stories of how men think they are supposed to talk to women. I asked her if she wanted me to delete it after we were married, and she said no because it was like a highlight of the day with the conversation. So, she not too long after that tried to tell me that she did not approve of a conversation that I was having with someone on my social media, but I had discussed with her exactly who it was and that they were from the site. She then started telling people how upset she was, and she never came to me about the situation. One of her best friends ended up telling me what she told them, and I was confused and brought it to her attention. Once I reminded her about what was going on and that I had already told her about what I was doing she looked at me and did not say anything. Once I went to the bathroom, she came in there to apologize to me about what happened. She had no reason to be upset with me because she was the only one in the wrong, we both had our pages set up to mess with people, so nothing related to the site was doing anything wrong. But I had never had anyone in the house, hung with any of my ex’s, or anything in that matter.

 Even though she apologized, I still felt some type of way and it bothered me to the point where I had a dream involving them. The dream was placed inside the mall. I was looking for Ezra because it was time to leave. I saw her as I was getting off the elevator but then I also saw him. As I was trying to get off the elevator to get to her, they disappeared. I remember calling her multiple times and then she called me back. When I answered the phone, I asked her where she was. She said she was in a store and that she would be out soon to go. I then looked down at the phone waiting for her to hang-up, but she never did. I put the phone up to my ear and I heard her and the guy having sex in the background. I was furious and I instantly hung-up and the phone and I woke up sweating. I looked at her while she was still sleeping like I wanted to fight her, but I ended up going back to sleep because it was a dream. A few days later after that incident Ezra had an episode and was talking about a picture that she posted that was getting attention in a lesbian group chat she was in. I asked to see the picture and was instantly hurt once again. It was a sexy picture of her behind in her underwear and no bra on, but you could not see the front of her. There was no point and fussing at the trippy version of her because normal Ezra was the one who posted it days prior. She then asked me if I wanted her to delete it but there was no point. The entire group had seen the picture. I patiently waited a few more days until she was back to the normal her and I brought it up. She looked at me with her big eyes as if I was not supposed to find out that she had posted it but her trippy past self always tells on her. After we discussed how inappropriate that was, she agreed but I just thought that things of that nature would not have to be taught as if you could still do whatever you wanted to do in a marriage. These two incidents really put a toll on how I felt about her because no one wants to be married to someone who doesn’t know at least the basics that come with marriage or even a solid relationship.

A few more days went by it was late and she asked if a couple of artsy people could come hang recite some poetry and vibe. I was all down for it. It was a good stress reliever, but I also asked her before they were invited into the house if they could be trusted, and she said yes. They came over and they were nice and down to earth. Ezra then wanted to get wine, so we made a trip out to the store. As we were about to check out the store with wine, pizza, and milk the worker expressed that after a certain time in the morning they can-not sell alcohol, so we just bought the rest of what we had. As we were headed to the door, we saw the girls still in the back, so we went to get them. They both walked out the store before us and the worker wanted to make sure we had bought our items since we walked back through the store. We were all good to go so there was no point in her checking. We then went to the next store that was opened to see if she could get her wine, but they had just stopped selling twelve minutes before. At this time, we just said we were going to go to the city and get stuff at the gas station because they do not have a time on when to stop purchasing liquor. I also wanted to give the girls gas money for driving to so many places. Once Ezra had gone into the store, they both started pulling food out of their coat pockets asking me if I wanted some. I instantly told them no. I was outraged because I knew they had not paid for any of the food. She then said that white people don’t deserve their money, so they take what they want from them. Once Ezra returned to the car, I wrote a note on my phone explaining to her what went down in the car while she was in the gas station. Her eyes were big again. I told her that before they came, I asked you where they trusted people and you said yes. Once we got home, we really did have some great deep conversations about life, health, eating habits and mental illnesses. It wasn’t bad at all. They respected our home, cleaned up what they messed up and made up their beds the morning after. They expressed to us that morning how the enjoyed their stay and that we should do it again sometime.

After some time of thinking long and hard about everything that was going on and how our lives had drastically changed, I was conflicted. There were some key things me and Ezra had discussed before marriage and those things were now not a factor. I started to really consider maybe this marriage was not the best for what we needed for one another with our health not up to par. Things continued to transpire. I was all over the place and in dire search for peace. I just felt as though too much was on me and I could not breathe. There was not a time where I could just take care of me, and for that I was dying on the inside. I was maxing out my strength, my hope, my perseverance, and I was just not in the best of shape mentally to continue the route that we were on. So, I called for a deep discussion on what we saw for one another, how would we make a change, and what we talked on before we married. The most stressful part of our marriage was, with my wife’s PTSD and Disassociation, for her to come back to the present from the past, she needed enough energy to make a transition which was only reached through having hard pounding sex. Now for me, who has heart issues, and the doctors advised me to not to overexert my body, with being on risk for stroke and heart attack, was stuck between a rock and a hard place.

I am not well enough to bring her home and I risk the part of possibly dying trying to do so. Anytime she would come back to the present she would bawl her eyes out because she would immediately understand that if she was present, it was because I sacrificed and did things that I was not supposed to do. I kid you all, one night I engaged in sex and when she came to, we ended up having a little talk and I got up to go to the restroom and my legs would not work. I first almost fell and after that I looked like my nerves in my legs were shocked. The entire time I was trying to make it, it was like I was a newbie to learning the art of walking. I wanted to cry so bad, but I think I was out of tears. It was like I was used to just bad things happening one after another. Also, this whole leg ordeal happened two more times, and I brought up divorce with extremely valid points. I could potentially die here trying to keep this relationship strong and it’s not really like she can help at this point because her health has declined significantly. As an understanding person I would think both would mutually agree that there is no way, but she wanted to push forward so I put the discussion of the divorce on the back burner.

As we were trying to figure out how we could succeed, we decided to host an open mic night. The event we hosted which would be considered our first Poetry Slam was called “Speak!” At first it was supposed to be held in our home but upon Ezra talking about it at a Word Up event, the owner of that place said that we could have it there. My only concern was how we were going to get there because of how far it was and neither one of us had transportation. My car needed some work done on it. But we figured some things out. The times were from 5pm to 10pm. She arrived a little before 5 to make sure everything was set up. I arrived with my mother a little after 5pm because I had some last-minute things that I had to get done. I was also making sure we had change for the event. I began to get a little discouraged because not many people were there. It was now a quarter till 8pm. I just wanted the event to start. She gave it about thirty more minutes and the crowd we were looking for started to come in. We had two professional Spoken Word performers, several poets, and a singer. The night ended great. We had 24 people there. For a first-time event that type of crowd was not expected. It was deep. You could feel the poetic vibe in the building. After that night we decided to host it later since people didn’t arrive until after 8pm. I began to stress to Ezra that we should have it in the beginning of the month and the end, and she disagreed and wanted to have it every Thursday night. I told her then we would wait until next week after. We had to at least have a line up. She said that she didn’t have anyone for the event, but she had sent the flyers out personally to over 25 people.

I didn’t attend the next one, but she said once she got there, only 4 people came out to the event, so they called it quits early and went to an Art show that was going on. Once she got there all the people that she had sent the flyer to and said they were coming were at that show. They expressed to her that they would be there the next week. She then sent me pictures that she took of the event which she received two business cards to take pictures at other events. I thought that she was about to have a way to where she could make money with jobs that she enjoyed that would not be too much on her. She emailed both people the next day with pictures of her work and she waited on them to respond. A few days later she just called them to check but honestly, I don’t think she got anywhere with neither one of them on doing their events. The 8th came around and she was ready for Speak! And again no one really showed, and she wanted to beat up on herself about promotion, but I saw how much she was promoting, people just were not coming out to the event. It was the reason why I wanted to host at the beginning and at the end of the month but as I explained she had to figure it out for herself. You can’t make people come especially if it’s not well developed, bringing in known artists, and creating an environment that is different from what is already developed. So, I talked to her again and she said that she was still going to host it every Thursday. The next Thursday came about, and I asked her again how many people there were she said 14. I thought she was doing good until she came home. I asked her how it was, she said most of the people who were there came for the bar and not for the event, so they did not pay. I then asked how many people were there and paid and she said five. That still isn’t a good number of people to have at an event and you have been hosting for almost a month. I just let it go and I told myself that I was going to just let her have Speak! for herself. We took a break from us so I felt like she needed something to keep her going whereas I had my art, throwing, music, and I have been working on other projects that I knew would be beneficial to my success when completed them.

Jan 28, 2018, Ezra had decided she was going to organize all her clothes and throw away things that she could no longer wear. I then decided that I was just going to organize my clothes because I had thrown away all the stuff I could not where before I had moved into the house. As we were cleaning up and organizing our belongings, I was almost done before she even touched the pile of clothes that she had on the floor. I then decided that I really needed to store some things in my trunk that I had upstairs. After I brought my trunk downstairs, I started to pull everything out of it. At the bottom of the trunk there were old memories of my past relationship with my ex-fiancé. There were two folders in there. One folder had his passport information from when I was going to bring him to America to live with me for a while, and the other was a sample invitation to our wedding that we were going to have. I did not think anything of it, so I pulled the wedding invitation out of the folder. As soon as I saw it, I instantly became teary eyed. I shocked myself because I have looked at it before and felt nothing. It was strange that this time when I looked at it, I felt strong raging emotions all over again. It was almost as if I still really wanted to be married to him even though we had gone our separate ways and we were both now married. I had to catch myself because then I started to think about how we use to be and what it would have been like to have been married to him. I then changed my thoughts instantly because that was the past and it should not even be a thought at that time in my life. I guess I was missing a lot.

I instantly put it up but then I asked my wife was it weird to feel some type of way after seeing the sample invitation and she said no because it was deep, and you were about to marry him. She said that I also had the whole wedding planned out. If she would have made it that far with her past two engagements, she would have felt the same way. I then put the invitation away with our other past possessions. I do not know why I still have almost everything that we shared whether it’s our old messages, pictures, or just my prayer requests to God for him. I still have them all and sometimes I wonder is that a sign that a change will come or is it just me holding on because he was truly my first love above Thomas. It had me thinking the whole night because I then reread those old prayers. I told God that I would not go down the same road I did in high school. I told him that I would listen and follow in his footsteps. Yet here I am. Not only did I disobey my own word and go down the same path, but then I got married to a woman and we don’t even share the same beliefs. How crazy is that?

I wrote a lot about change and doing better for myself, yet I am back in the same place that I said I would never be. I believe that somewhere deep down I was hurt so bad about him having that baby that I just completely forgot everything that we even discussed in that time. It feels like I am once again ignoring God because I am still living in my flesh instead of letting my flesh burn daily as it should. I was so quick to marry because that’s where I wanted to be so bad in my life that I did not care about those key components that determines if two people are truly compatible. I just feel like sometimes I have lost sight of who I am and who I use to be. I had a goal to be closer to God and marry a man. To be better at receiving God as my all but all I have done now is make up excuses as to why I think that my sin should be waived. I makeup excuses about how I picked my sin but if I do everything else right, I will be fine. I can’t excuse the fact that I am always questioning what I am doing and my happiness. The path I chose is definitely coming to an end. I just hate that I had to bring another person in to my unstableness, creating a desired relationship as if I was the perfect hero, to now being the evil villain of a never ending unhappily ever after.

Jan 29th, 2018, Mom called me a little while after she dropped me off at home to tell me that Ezra had mail at her house. Upon reading what it said on the front it had come from the incident with her job and the Xbox. She had been charged for the game system and the games equaling almost $900. We were shocked because they found the game system still on the property so how would she have to pay for something that was not stolen. Then to, she was still hired at her job because she provided the correct paperwork from her job confirming that she indeed has Chronic PTSD and Disassociation. She then called her mom to get things set up with a lawyer to help her with her case that is Feb. 13th. A week and a half before the date of her court appearance, she had to house sit her mom’s house while she was caring for her family. Her mom had to travel for work, and she did not want her family there unattended. Friday Feb 9th, I received a call from Ezra saying that while she was talking to her Lawyer, she could not remember everything that happened. She then explained to him that I was with her the day we went back to the police station to clear her name. He then wanted to speak with the both of us on Sunday Feb. 11th at 9:15am. What in the world have I gotten myself into?

State of depression

It is crazy that even in my head at night I am stressed. I literally don’t have a lick of time to myself to relax. In my sleep there is a ton of awkward moments that I can’t even explain. This dream was about Thomas who was my first love. He asked if he and Krystal, his baby mama, could hang and I had no problem with it because I wanted to see the baby. Once they had arrived and we were hanging out, I had the baby in my hands. Thomas then said they he had something to say. He pulled a ring out his pocket and I couldn’t believe that he would do that in front of me and in my home. I instantly went off on him because it was boundaries that I thought that he had just crossed. After that Krystal took her baby from me and they hurried up and left. I have no idea why I was dreaming about him or why did it take place in my home. It was crazy. That same night I had another dream that revolved around my middle school, I was at Lincoln for school, and something happened that had the police out. Somehow, they were now after us because we stole Vinny’s (my mother’s classmate) car. We hid it in some houses, broke in somebody house to use the bathroom, made or way back to Lincoln next to the metro link and was then waiting for the link without getting caught to make our grand escape. I have no idea why my dreams ae always so intense, but it stressed me out so bad. Sometimes to the point where I did not ant to go to sleep.

Feb 6th, it was around 2:00 am and I had just got done with some art. I was hungry, so I decided to fix some cereal. Ezra had gotten some Vanilla Silk Milk because they did not have my regular Vanilla Almond Milk. As I was drinking it, it was not going down smooth. At first, I thought it was the type of cereal. So, I only had a little left and I finished. After I was done my throat became irritated and I had to continue to clear my throat. I decided to drink some Gatorade in hopes that it will clear. I drank some water to try to sooth my throat. After I drank the water, I felt nauseous. I went to the bathroom and sure enough I threw up. It wasn’t the normal vomit because there was blood visible. It was also a lot of mucus in the toilet. I was surprised in the order that everything came up. The milk came first, next the cereal, then the blue Gatorade and I believe the water was last. After a few times of coughing up small blood spots, I called my mom to let her know what was going on. She said they she would take me in the morning after I described to her what the blood looked like.

When morning came and mama called, I had just gone to sleep. I told her that once I woke up, we could go to the ER. Around 3pm I called her to tell her I was ready. Once she had her clothes on, we made our way. As we were driving to the ER, I was explaining to her that in the back of my throat there were black spots. When I looked it up, the web said that it was linked to mouth cancer. A sign that could cause that type of cancer is frequently biting on your jaws. I always bite on my jaws so of course I was scared to know exactly what was going on. Once I got to the ER, they checked my blood pressure and asked what I was there for. My blood pressure was 161 over 101 and I told them about throwing up blood and showed them what it looked like. I told them about my heart, and I mentioned my kidneys. Immediately they wanted to make sure I was not having a silent heart attack, so they ran an EKG, and they performed a chest X-ray. They took blood samples and urine samples. My blood work came back normal, but they said that I had red blood cells in my urine, so they wanted to do a CT scan of my kidneys to see if there were stones. As I was waiting for them to take me down to do that test, they checked my blood pressure, and it was still high. After that, maybe 30 minutes had passed, and they were releasing me and giving me prescriptions.

I asked them what the results on my scan were, and he said once I got dressed to come to the front desk. I asked her if she found anything and she said that she could not find anything linked to kidney disease or stones, but she does know that my bladder was spasming. I was wondering if I was going to have Interstitial cystitis like my mother. But I again didn’t linger too much on self-diagnosis. When I got back home, I was fine. A couple days later, the 11th, I decided to eat some more cereal. This time it was almond milk and cheerios, so I did not think it would bother me. The cereal and milk went down fine. After I was done, I started to feel sick all over again. I was spitting up mucus, but the cereal never came up. I thought that if I went to sleep that I would feel better. I needed a good sleep because I had to be ready to head to the Lawyers office to talk to them about the Ezra’s case. I really did not want to be involved in it no more than I was. My anxiety and comfort were destroyed but, I told her that I would go. Around 7:00 in the morning I was constantly running back and forth to the bathroom throwing up small amounts of mucus. Since there was nothing else that I ate the only thing that I hoped would come up was the cereal. It never came up, so I messaged Ezra to explain to her that I was not going to be able to make it to the lawyer. I explained to her what was going on. She still tried to get me to go as she was leaving her mom’s house, but I was still in the bathroom dry heaving. She then went on to her appointment and I tried to go back to sleep. While I was sleep, I was fine but as soon as I woke up, I was running back to the bathroom. Ezra ended up coming home around 1 pm and she could tell that I was not feeling good. She immediately wanted to be up under me, but she was too cold. I do not like the cold and I am borderline anemic. It made my illness worsen. I was trying to explain that to her, but she insisted on touching me anyways. I was so pissed because she did not understand that I did not want her to touch me until she warmed up.

Once she was warm enough it was much better. I ended up going back to sleep. A few hours later I was cold, so I decided it was time for me to take a shower just in case I had to make another visit to the ER. Once I was in the bathroom my body temperature began to rise. So, I immediately went to the cold part of the house to cool down. I then went back to the bathroom, and I sat in the tub with warm water running on me. After five minutes of doing so I was back cold so I asked Ezra to turn up the heat and close the door. When I turned the hot water on, I had some relief from being nauseated but then I was getting a strong headache. I constantly had to change the temperature of the water to accommodate how my body was feeling. I spent about two hours in the tub trying to feel better. Once I got out it was not long before I started to feel the same all over again. I then took intense headache meds and asked my mom if she could bring me some clear soda. After she came through, I sipped on it and went to sleep. I had awoken from my sleep twice both times I was drenched in sweat. I figured whatever was going on was coming out. When I woke up the second time, I was not nauseous, but I sure was hungry. I asked Ezra to fix me some pizza and surprisingly it stayed down.

That night, I ended up having a dream about auntie and it was a bit strange. It took place in my grandmother’s home. I can’t quite recall what my aunt did, but she made me so angry that I back handed her. After that I was crying and yelling, “Look what you made me do!” After that it was bad because out of all my violent dreams, I have never been able to hit anyone the correct way. My hand has always turned sideways upon contact, or it has curved so I could not hit the person I wanted to hit. In this dream I was able to hit her with force directly. I have been having violent dreams for about 2 ½ years all have been the same with not being able to hit the person. I was shocked even in the dream and my mother said, “She had it coming.” As the dream continues auntie then got in the car and drove away and we did the same. Once I woke up, I had to tell my mom what had happened. I had already had some encounters with her, and I had been holding back switching into the black out anger mode with her. I have never had a violent dream involving family. So, to have had that type of dream and to be able to hit her correctly was a true warning sign to avoid any type of confrontation with her. After I told mom what had happened, and I also told my other aunt about it, we all agreed that the sign was real and that it should be an indicator to watch myself.

At that time, I was still trying to figure out if a divorce was the solution to our marriage. It just wasn’t strong, and I felt like it wasn’t going to get strong because we couldn’t fend for ourselves. We didn’t even have it together for at least one person to make something happen. I just felt defeated with the marriage and though I was trying to make it work, there was little progression to give me hope that maybe we could potentially make it happen. On February 15th, it was the last day that the money in our bank would carry on the bills. Ezra had discussed with her mother beforehand that she would need to stay with her once all the money was gone for bills. Her mother then agreed that she could. When that day came, she then wanted to express to Ezra that she could no longer stay with her because she had taken in her baby sister, her kids, her niece, and her boyfriend along with their kids. I believe it was like twelve of them. I became angry because no child should have to look for a shelter to live at when you knew weeks ago that she was going to have to stay with you. In the mist of Ezra calling my granny to ask for a few more days.

I took it upon myself to message her mother. I could have expressed my message better I didn’t care and from the history of what I know has happened with Ezra’s PTSD it started with her mother and father. I said, “Good Afternoon this is Aaliah. I do understand the situation that is going on with your sister and everyone who is currently living in your home. However, Ezra discussed with you before any of that came into play about the last bill coming out today, and that she would need to stay with you for a while and you agreed. She also explained to me at one point if both of us needed to stay with you we could. The thing that’s bothering me is that this is not just a random person who is calling out for help from you. This is your daughter. You always want her to talk to you about the seriousness of what’s going on deep with her but, right now in her time of need, you again are not there. On top of that she said you yelled at her. Now I don’t know all the details, but I guess that’s the difference in the way our families are, but I don’t understand how a mother shuts out her own child. You use her to help you keep the house in order. I just feel like since it was discussed before there should not be a turnaround in conversation and you should be picking up your daughter.” Five minutes after I sent the message, her mother called me saying how she was overwhelmed about how long the message was and that I should have called her. I did not call her because I honestly don’t want to talk to her, I stopped liking her when everything involving her children had to be on her time. She always wants them to tell her what’s going on but as I was explaining to her on the phone about her daughter’s illness, she did not know anything about it. Ezra has told me about several times throughout her life she has tried to discuss certain situations with her mother and either she could not make time for her, or she just was not there.

Ezra had also expressed to me that her mother confessed to her about failing her kids. She thought that all she had to do was provide a roof and food but not be there for them when they need to communicate or just need their mom period. She started to get smart with me on the phone after she asked for clarification of the message. After I explained to her what I meant, even though the message was obvious and dumb down to where any person could understand. She said,” It is not a problem to get my daughter. She is always welcome to come home at any time. She does not have to stay with you. I don’t understand the dynamics of what you and your family have going on over there, but my daughter can come home to me.” I laughed because what dynamics is she talking about? I would still prefer my family over what I’ve seen and heard from theirs. I know every family is different but in the black community we are lacking healthy families. It is trash and even with what I am dealing with in mine, we still have great “dynamics” or whatever she was talking about. But it was also funny that once I said something suddenly, your daughter could come home. Now that was some weird dynamics, but I didn’t expect anything less. At the same time, I became angered because what does my family have to do with us not having any more money saved to take on the bills at the house we are staying at? I really wanted to tell her about herself, but I left it alone because she is older than me and respect goes a long way. I just wanted to clarify that Ezra has issues with her memory so if she has told you anything that makes it seem like my family hates her then she is misinforming you on exactly why we had to move out my mother’s house and why she is getting sued at her job. After we got off the phone, I waited a while and Ezra called asking me why I talked to her mother. She was coming at me like I could not have a conversation with them, yet she has been calling my mother and my grandmother about things that have been going on. In the mist of the conversation, I told her just like you have been calling my family, I have the right to call your mom and see why she has told you four times that you cannot come to her house but as soon as she talks to me, she wants to say that you are always welcome in her home.

After all that, I just wanted to know if she was going to get Ezra since she said that she didn’t have to stay in my home. Ezra immediately said, “No she is not going to get me.” I said exactly, I know your mother and I would not want a mom like that. You should not have to look up shelters to live if the road gets bumpy. I can’t help that she wanted to save her baby sisters kids and everyone else, but she used you to watch her house for over a week while she during business but now you can’t live there for a little bit.” I was confused on how a person can act big on the phone and still not stand on their word, but they claim to be a good Christian. Strange to me but whatever helps her sleep at night, I guess. Ezra then asked me what time I would be home, and I told her not too long. After I arrived home, we had a talk about what was all going on and I broke it down from beginning to end about how I felt and why I was going in the direction that I was with possible divorce. She understood my reasons and said that she had been thinking about everything that had happened and that she was mature enough to make the decision that it was not fair to me to have to deal with all her problems. Especially with our health being in a critical state. I also agreed. I had made up my mind months ago about a divorce. I was just hoping that it would have gotten better but it was no such thing as better. After a while of silence, granny called me to see if I could watch my great granny while she and auntie went to their small group meeting. I agreed, and she told me to be ready in about an hour 45 minutes. I told her that I was leaving, and she was okay with it. She was still holding on to our event Speak! She was getting ready to host it.

I had not been able to make it to the events because I had been helping my granny and auntie out with my great granny. Once I was out helping my great granny, everything would be fine until around 8:30pm. My granny would get hostile. She started asking me about her husband and her aunt and I was telling her that they had passed last year. The first time she asked, she believed me. Around the third and fourth time she asked she called me a liar. She asked me to call the old house phone and I told her it was disconnected, and I knew because I lived there. I should not have said that because she told me that only she stays there, and I can’t put her out her house. She also said that she had never known of having a disrespectful grandchild. If they would have ever asked how I was, she would have never been able to tell them that. I told her that my feelings were hurt by her words, so I called her house phone to show her that I was not lying. After that she apologized to me for calling me a liar and being disrespectful. Once we had that conversation, granny walked in the door, and it was time to give great granny her medicine and put her to bed.

After granny dropped me off at home, I started on some artwork. I was all in my head. Life was still just unorganized. I didn’t get to have a golden 21st birthday because everything in my life was just a disaster. Neither Ezra nor I could afford the bills at the house, so we had to move. Ezra went to the neighboring state to stay with her sister because her mother reneged on their plans, and I was going to head back to my mother’s home. However, I just couldn’t move back. I was tired from all the bad communication between us, so I took it upon myself to have a talk with granny about me continuing to stay at the house. I told her that I would keep all the bills down as best as I could, but I just really couldn’t make that move. I just wanted some peace if I could. Also, around this time I was getting ready to start as the new assistant track and field coach at the school where I held the two IESA titles in shot put. I was really looking forward to this new position as well as this was my way of giving back to the community. I felt as though maybe 2018 life would start to pick up and I would be able to shine light. Though being a coach was something I wanted to get into. The mix of being hired, or I should say, having to deal with people who don’t know how to do things right in the district was frustrating. It took a long time for me to even be a part of practices because the Board didn’t have my paperwork in order. I had done everything that I needed to do and was still given the run around. Then when it was time to finally make a move. I was the happiest camper. I participated in the practices and all. I wanted to set a great example for the kids as well as start a new role to recruit kids to understand what the field events were about in track and field.

When it was time to officially move into outdoor practices, I had conversations with both the girls’ and boys’ coaches. Though I was hired for the girls, I was for whoever wanted to throw. It didn’t matter if it was the girls or if it was the boys. I wanted them to have the opportunity to make some noise. The boys always delivered because they wanted to throw, and the coaches understood my motive. The girls wanted to throw bad, but their coach didn’t send them over when I asked, and I asked a lot. After a while I was tired of asking but also hurt because after practice the kids would be upset. I had no real control being a new coach. I was just an assistant. But I had to do what I had to do. I worked with the boy’s day after day and a few times I would have both boys and the girls. The most I could coach the girls would be at the meets but at that time it was too late to try to mold them or produce anything. I was never given an opportunity to do my job and for that I would seriously have to evaluate if that was something I could work with. As the season progressed my boys showed out and the jealousy and mean mugs were evident from the girl coaches. How can you dislike someone who reached out several times and the girls had potential? I was not happy but in the end the kids suffered the most.

I went the entire season really working with just the boys to the point where the boys coach wanted me to just be around them for away meets and all. I accepted their invitation because they were the only ones who utilized my existence. If it wasn’t for them, I would have just been there at the rings waiting for the head coach to do her job. It was not a good experience, but I learned what I would never tolerate as a coach as well has how to be an even better coach. Once all the regular season meets were over, one of my boys made it to the state meet. I was happy to be back there at the meet where I made it happen twice. The only issue was he was an eighth grader who had never been to anything like that, and he had anxiety issues with people watching him. Though he made it to the big show, I felt as though he wouldn’t have been ready for the type of audience that was going to be watching him. I still had hope that we would be able to block it out but that’s a huge step.

Once we had arrived, I could tell he was going to be nervous. He only had one event because he messed up is shot put at the sectional meet. But I was rooting hard for him. Everyone was looking at him. He was a big guy. He made me look like a kid, so the audience were trying to figure out who was it coach. When competition started, they found out and I had a few conversations with some people who we then exchanged, and they figured out who I was. Sadly, my boy scratched all his throws. Though he was upset with himself, we had a long conversation about everything that happened. He was so much more at ease, and I was just proud of him regardless because he made it and I was the one who was able to help him get there. The girls overall placed 2nd and the boys did good but didn’t place. It was a decent run of coaching, but I really wanted to see what was next for me. Of course, there was a sports banquet for the kids, and I knew that coaching there even from the principles speech towards me was not in my favor. It’s crazy how people can dislike you and they are the cause of this issues that transpired. or I earned that position to have been given that position. There was no easy way. But a throwing coach from a D1/ international athlete could have been just what the program needed. I possess a lot of knowledge and not just in my area of expertise. The program could have really taken off, but the city is no place for real change or growth. I just didn’t have the energy for that battle when everything else was already falling apart. So, I had decided that I was going to make it happen with school again. I was still inside from practicing with the kids, so I just needed either my coach or some coach to give me an offer.

Meanwhile during the summer after being separated for months, Ezra came to spend the night with me, and I came up with a plan to try to save our marriage. I don’t know why I wanted to save it, I just felt like maybe I was over processing it because of everything that we had been through. We got married for a reason so maybe I had one more trick up my sleeve. When we saw one another, it was like an emotional roller-coaster. I told her that I wanted to see how we interacted while everyone else thought that we were splitting up for good. I seriously thought that we could enjoy each other without the outside input. If we could, then I would back off from wanting a divorce. This was the first time she wanted to explore something a little different. I knew we weren’t solid, but we were just going to enjoy our time. We then downloaded this friend app where we did live videos and had quite a few members who were tuned into our lives. We had so much fun with the app. There was a part in the app where you could bestow someone to be a bouncer for our live videos. This was a person who monitored things that were said and if they were giving us any problems the bouncer could ban them from the video. After a while of having fun with our bouncer, we became fond of Sergio. We decided to go on a friendly date with him. He drove a bit of a distance, but we met over in Saint Louis in a very public area. For a while we waited to see if he would show from a distance in our car. After that we spotted him and waited to see what he was going to do. We had to be alert just in case but also, it was two crazies against one male who didn’t seem to carry the traits we had but you never know. One crazy can sense likeminded crazies.

 While he was looking around for us, we decided to make ourselves visible and yes, I had told my mother where we were going and who we were meeting etc. prior to this meet us just in case anything should have happened. To my surprise he was the sweetest, nerdiest, and quite the gentleman. He wanted to walk around a visit everything. He was also paying for everything. We were grateful for him providing the finances since we didn’t have much which was discussed over our live chat several times, but he understood and just wanted everyone to have a great time. He’s an analytical chemist and I was looking at him like what do you want with us broke folks. But the day was set. I felt as though him and Ezra had more of a connection because they were both anime fans, played the game called Magic and they just seemed to click. I really didn’t have much to offer in exchange, but we still had a great time. After a few hours had passed, I had another engagement because my aunt was having her birthday festivities that day. They all knew the plans, but I was surprised that Ezra wanted to keep him company while I headed to dinner, considering this was the first time, we had officially met him. But she was grown and could make her own decisions so she said we would all meet after. Once I was in the car, I called my mother to tell her how it went, and she instantly snapped on me. She was so upset that I was out with a stranger and though I told her beforehand, she forgot, and said that I should not have done that. She was so mad that she called my grandmother and had her calling me to see what happened. I was over it. To me I feel like sometimes when you go on dates it’s not always going to be with someone you grew up with or someone who you’ve known for a while. But she was convinced that I could not and should not have gone at all. I just took a deep breath drove furiously to the restaurant but calmed down when I saw my favorite person. Great granny!

While we were waiting to get seated at the German restaurant, Sergio and Ezra continued to explore the shops in STL. I made sure that I kept in touch with her, and she was alright. When great granny arrived, my heart lit up and she just made the entire celebration worth every single moment. After we were done there, it was time for the second half of the festivities. I asked my aunt if it was okay for Sergio to join since he was still here, and she said yes. We ended up going to a pub and the atmosphere was lovely. When Sergio and Ezra arrived, my mother changed her perspective of him. He even offered to pay for whatever she wanted that night. Sergio immediately spoke to everyone and wished my aunt a happy birthday. Then he wanted to make sure we were set for the night. He introduced us to a beer that rattled my taste buds and he just kept ordering food until we literally had to tell the waitress no more. He just wanted to make sure we enjoyed his company because he really enjoyed ours. Once the night was over, he expressed how much of a great time he had and that hopefully we could all go out again sometime. I then asked my mother how she felt about him, and she said, “He’s cool. I like him.” I just left it alone and went back to my house with Ezra to get some rest and hope that he was going to make it home safely. When I got home, I found out that they had also gone to the mall and they both picked out body creams for me and Ezra. I was surprised!

The very next day, Sergio wanted to plan for a longer stay. We didn’t have any plans so we told him the rules and if he could respect those, we had no problem with him spending time with us. So, we planned for a few days and here he was again on the road to head to see us. We both put on the cremes that he bought but I wasn’t satisfied with mine because it was a smell that really didn’t go with my skin. I was a bit confused because Ezra should have known the type of smells that I liked but she got something that was less appealing for me and hers was on point. It was the fruity/ musty smell. But when he arrived, he brought his air mattress, and it was time to really show him around Saint Louis. We took him to several art museums, and we went to the history museum. We even blasted classical music as we rode around the streets of STL. A lot of the time he just wanted to hang out but there was never a dull moment with getting different kinds of foods. There were times when I had to leave for family functions so Ezra spent time with him, but she said that he was becoming annoying with his nerdy outbursts. I thought they were funny no matter how many times he said it but that was her end game. She said that she wasn’t feeling him like that, but it was something about him that I wanted to keep him around even if he was just a good friend. Unfortunately, he ended up taking a job further way in Louisiana and that was the last outing that we had. I kept in contact with him every so often.

During that time, I was also trying to get back to my roots. I wanted to be back at my school and just when coach messaged me to come back, he suddenly didn’t message back about putting in my paperwork, so I was devastated. I knew that I was no longer solid enough to live out the rest of my life as a D1 athlete. I was now on the search to see if I could fit into a lower divisions which crushed my heart. I remember as well as saved the very conversation that did not get a response April 25, 2018. I was excited to tell him about coaching and that my throws were right on the money. He wanted me to get into a meet, but I expressed that I didn’t know what colleges were hosting open meets near to do so. After he said that he would check into it and let me know, I immediately responded that even if there weren’t any meets close, I was willing to come to the school and perform to let him know that I was keeping up with everything. However, there was no response to that message, and I didn’t attempt to reach back out. I felt as though that wasn’t good enough and that my eligibility for D1 would be short so why risk or spend time and money on a broken athlete.

I then got accepted to a private school not far from the city. I decided the best option to escape here would be to stay on campus. That way I could continue to focus on getting my life together as well as my marriage. Oh, how this would backfire, but I had hope in my decisions. So, mind you all my wife really wanted a poly relationship and one of her best friend’s friend was the topic of discussion. We met her a few times and he and Ezra were set on this young lady being the perfect person. Though I really wasn’t for a poly relationship, if I were to participate, I would have preferred a male because I, without a doubt, want kids and that would be the easiest way instead of spending loads of money at a sperm bank for the same donor, and storage fees. But Ezra was not into men like that, so I folded. I felt deep down that it would not be good. Not only with her sickness or mine but just because we were not stable enough in our own relationship to bring someone else in. She insisted, and when I really felt unease of the decision, she yelled at me. I asked her why it couldn’t just be us in our marriage and with a loud echo behind it she yelled, “No.” I swear my feelings were hurt so bad that I couldn’t hold back those tears. But I put my feelings away and allowed this poly relationship to be our reality. Once she was in our lives to see if she would like it, I explained everything to her from A-Z. All our issues, our separation, health issues, financial issues and she said she was fine with it all. Her occupation was also Analytical Chemist. Does that sound familiar? What do these people see in our broke asses. But here we go into the world of poly.

As school and track picked up speed, I remember having so many complications. On Sep.14th 2018 I reached out to Coach Montez. I messaged, “Hey just a concern about these study sessions. Are they mandatory? I can’t remember from the meeting because of my memory but I know you all went over it. Just a little blurry. But my concern is (time) not enough for me to rest a recover because now I must be at some study session that I don’t need. It’s an overkill.” Like I’m doing my best working with everything that’s going on. I’m trying not to relapse even though I’m close. If I can’t get my time because of all this scheduled time it won’t work. Majority, if not all the students, have unlimited time, with my health I don’t. I’m also married so being up and active all day all night with y’all is not ideal for me. His response was, “I think you’re more capable than you’re communicating right now. The short answer is that I am fine with you not attending but if grades slip for any reason, I will have you return, Let’s plan to meet in a few weeks to discuss classes to endure things are going well and that’s good with me.”

At that moment just reading the first part of, “I’m more capable than I’m communicating”, kind of struck a nerve. So, in response to him I stated, “I know my own self more than anyone coach. What you see is not what’s going on and I stress that. I guess not enough before I signed. If I was capable, I wouldn’t have any complaints. I take my health very serious because at this point it could end my career or life as far as organs shutting down or anybody else’s life from my mental state. I do not want a repeat from how I’ve been. You may not know what’s all wrong and the degree of how dangerous it is and can be. If you need a run down like I’ve expressed to Coach Ballard from A-Z we can surlily meet. My grades are my priority if I need additional help on my time I know where the success center is and how to communicate with my teachers. But we can schedule a time to meet to discuss all these things. (We never had the meeting) I figured he thought he was talking to a kid or something as if I wasn’t the oldest as well as married. I was there for strictly business not because I needed a babysitter or to get used to college life. Been there done that, been on my own etc. I guess he learned that day.

Now with Coach Ballard, I am always willing to be trained by any coach especially if it’s a coach from a school that I’ve chosen to attend. However, because of my caliber within the track and field community and the assistance of the head coach. Our initial meet and great was her fear that I thought that I was above all of them and that I was not going to be coachable. I am humbled and I was seriously just trying to live my truth as sick as I was. The expectations of my performance were overkill, and I will never appreciate the type of coaches who use athletes to boost their credibility because they don’t have any real talent in coaching to make a good name for themselves. I learned very early after my departure that a lot of the athletes who attend lesser divisions have soo much talent, but the coaches don’t have the proper skills to mold them into the athletes that they desire to be. My heart was torn day one. There were days where all she knew was, the regimens of the male Olympic athletes and swore that I should have known how to do the workout plans of those athletes. To be honest, a great coach would understand that to successfully coach throwers, they must be individually evaluated and have workout plans that cater to just that. As a certified coach, I found myself having to help my teammates. They would ask me often how life as a D1 athlete was. I would have to explain to them the vast differences. I spent most of my time coaching them. I wished better for them, and I knew no real growth would come from the program. I also learned that my piss poor throws would still be celebrated and needed just for points. Programs like that should never exist but I continued to try to be there in my right mind. The program also lacked proper strength and conditioning training. Those plans should also be individualized based on events. A thrower should not be working on things that cater to distance runners’ vice versa. If I could have been more vocal, I would educate these schools sooo much on where they lack understanding. They always want to put blame on the athlete’s performance but fail to realize the true disappointments lie within the coaching staff. As people, I can see where people value, loved and enjoyed them. As coaches they should not be. Not even for middle school athletes. From that time on while I was at the school, I was having serious issues with my hips, kidneys, and they even thought I had chronic kidney disease and Lupus. It was just a lot to take in, but I really tried my best to continue to show up and show out with my sport and in my study’s.

September 27th, this day was my granny’s birthday. I was as happy as I could be. I went to lunch with Ezra and was trying to see what gifts I was going to get my grandmother for her birthday. After we were finished with lunch, we headed to the mall. I went to one of the earth stores and saw the perfect elephants for granny and they were purple. I figured she would love them because she has a thing for antique like pieces. While I was there, I saw this beautiful butterfly wrap that can be worn multiple ways. So, I decided to get it for mama. A lot of the time I don’t have funds to get presents for her for special occasions like birthdays or Mother’s Day so since I had some to spare, I wanted her to know that I am always thinking of her, and the gift was dear to my heart. With everything that was going on in my life, I just wanted to give good gifts for once. After we arrived at granny’s she absolutely loved her birthday gift, but I was really stuck on bringing my mother her gift. If I could explain it, it would be like watching her eyes light up and being appreciative, though I figured she would have said, “Oh Boobie, you didn’t have to get me anything, but this is so nice.” Boy was I off!

After we arrived at my mother’s house, I was so excited and filled with emotions. It was time to give her this amazing butterfly gift that would light up her eyes. Yea right. She looks at the gift and says that I should have gotten something that she could wear or use. She also wanted to go exchange the gift out. Another moment in history where my heart was completely shattered beyond repair. At my lowest and fighting for my life, it never fails to be the most disappointed. I felt so out of place that I literally just went to the bathroom and cried my eyes out. I didn’t think there was such a pain that could be worse than all the trauma I had endured thus far. Boy, was I fooled? Ezra was disgusted and when I shared that information with a few close people, they were in awe that this was I was going through.

Days later after breaking my silence on the matter, my mother tried to change the narrative as if she was saying that she should return it to give me my money back. Her point that she was trying to make was shut her down quick. If she would have communicated that when she opened the gift, it would have been different. I would have still been like, “I’m alright. I whole heartedly wanted to buy you this. I’ve budgeted my coins and I am alright.” But she said to me that it was not of use to her at all, and her taking it back to the store was so she could exchange it for something of use. For the millionth time a child had to realize that she had endured the most of her traumatic experiences from her only parent with no way to discuss those issues maturely. If those types of discussions came my mother would have called me disrespectful or out of a child’s place though technically after living on my own, being married, and taking care of adult responsibilities that child stuff was dead. I can’t necessarily help that I must be slightly dependent because my health failed me but, with pure hate in my heart for the storm I’ve been given, God also knows that I would never wish this life on a soul. It is not for the weak. Though some days I must really separate myself from my situation, it just gets too deep for my own strength to handle.

On October 9th, my mother and I had a very short conversation on my health. I wasn’t asking for an answer just having conversation, or for better words, I was just trying to vent a little. I was questioning why all these issues had to happen while I was trying to be great in school. I laughed in this message saying is this a sign of no for school or something. My mother decided to take it in another direction saying, “I don’t know. I just wished you didn’t get tired of going to the doctors while you had time off, but it is what it is. I thought it wasn’t time for you to go back yet but you were determined to go back, and I didn’t want to be that non supportive parent.” Deep down, I wanted to call her out on not being supportive this entire time that I’ve been sick and married but, in response I told her the truth. “If they said they couldn’t find anything like I told you before, why would I continue to go back? I did all the test he had for me as well as all the tests the other doctor set up. When I had the CT scan of my kidneys, she said that she went all through the images, and she could not find anything. If it’s not detected, then it doesn’t matter. I can’t continue to stay at home. I’m not a home body. I never will be. That’s just how I was made. If I can just get one step closer, is all I ask. If I can have a job that won’t mess with my health, I literally would have my degree. I need to be making money. Then, when the going gets tough, you always say how dependent I must be on you and that’s not great to hear every time either. I’d rather not be but, I can’t pick and choose my illness.” Her response was simply that she’s going to leave the conversation alone. She said, “Have a good day at school.” I said, “OK, but school is over. Thanks.”

So often, there are times that mom decides to play the blame game. One day while we were in the store with my uncle, she was asking him to see if he knew how to get the toilet seat off because the screw was stripped. They were having a small conversation and then out of the blue she started blaming him because he was the one who put the seat on. While he was living with us, he has always changed out seats no problem. This seat has been on the toilet for a long time. My uncle has moved 3 times and each stay was for at least 2 to 3 years at each spot. We weren’t understanding how he stripped the screw if he hasn’t touched it in years. Before the conversation, I thought it was just wear and tear and trying to tighten from time to time when it gets loose. She decided to blame him for it and wasn’t letting up on it. Sounds familiar for events that were happening throughout my life. At that moment it was her system clogging. Since Ezra and I have been out the house, anytime that we visit we don’t throw our tissues in the toilet because we use a lot. I have OCD, so I have to use a certain amount. So, we were only at the house for I believe 2 days, and the first day I made sure I reminded her to throw her tissue in the trash. Now what my mother doesn’t know is I’m always in the bathroom with my spouse so I’m literally seeing tissue tossed into the toilet. I believe that it was clogged because of how much water we were using for those two days. So here comes the message after we are long gone. It says, “My drain is clogged up again. I thought it was when I was washing and noticed water around the drain.” I wanted to know how so, I questioned it. Instantly she said, “It got to be from using too much toilet tissue.” I said, “Who? We threw in the trash.” She then said that it hadn’t been raining. So, I said that it wasn’t our fault this time. Of course, here comes the blame game. She messaged me saying that this was the same problem when we were staying there. It’s not coming from the sump pump and that she hasn’t had that problem since we left. She just saying. So, I’m like, it’s not our fault with tissue. I’m just saying that all our tissue is in the trash can. Don’t blame. She then says that she’s not trying to be funny but just because tissue is in the trash can doesn’t mean anything. She (Ezra) was blowing her nose a lot and she was using the bathroom too and it wasn’t any tissue in the trash can. I know you get sensitive when I talk about things that she does, but I wasn’t wrong the first time and more than likely I’m probably not wrong about this time either. It is what it is. I just must do what I did last time. To take a pause from the discussion, nobody knew why the drain was getting clogged the first time. We also weren’t in denial about using too much tissue. We just didn’t know that it would clog the system because I’ve always used the same amount all my life. But for her to say that there was no tissue in the trash can was crazy because there was a whole trash can full and me and her both emptied the trash the day that me and Ezra left. I wasn’t understanding her point at all.

Again, my mother helped me dump the full can, so how can she say there was nothing in it. Of course, there’s nothing in it now. But to blame and I watched Ezra the entire time was crazy. I was not letting down up on that argument because this wasn’t one of those times that she was right. I then began to explain that I asked again, and all tissues were thrown in the trash can, so we won’t cause anything to happen. It’s not about being funny but when stuff goes wrong its always our, my, his, her fault. It’s also not about me being sensitive about her, I’m sensitive because for a very long time it was never anything that I’ve done. That’s why I’m sensitive and you never apologized for it either. But okay cool. So, her response was, “Well you know what, I apologize for those things that I blame you for that you never did. I said thank you with a smiley face, but I was not satisfied with the way the apology was set up. A time that I can recall was something as little as where is the dustpan. She swore up and down that I misplaced it and I always am the last person that has stuff. When things go missing it’s because I did not put it back where it was. I tried to explain to her at that time that I did not have it, and I honestly didn’t know where it was. So, I went looking for it to find that it was behind her the whole time. She was chuckling about it being behind her but, I’m not. I was trying to see if she was going to apologize so I brought it up. I said, “Dang, so are you going to apologize?” She brushed it off as if it wasn’t a big deal but, for some reason that specific moment has been with me from the day it happened.

Oct 16th was the beginning of the new storm. I was about a week and a day out of class, and I was discussing matters with my mother. She was asking if I was going to be able to finish out the semester but with all these new symptoms, I really didn’t know what I was going to be able to do. So, I spent the night over Ezra’s moms house because it was close to campus and I was around her so if something were to happen, she would be able to get me an ambulance or help. Whereas if I was at the apartment alone or even if my roommate was there, he would not know if I was in my room unconscious or dying. Nobody would know. So, going back to the apartment by myself was not a smart decision on my end. Nor would it get me to class because I still have to drive there. If I was physically incapable of getting up for school, then it would not matter where I laid my head. At that point with my organs doing what they were doing, what took me out of school in the first place was showing its ugly face. Being extremely antsy and irritated was not going to sit right trying to learn for classes that are 50 minutes or over an hour. long. So, my mother decided to tell me to bring myself home. I did not respond to that message ultimately because it’s the last place that I would want to live. Visiting is okay but that is all. That same day I decided to just take a nap and get myself together. All throughout my sleep my heart was skipping beats. I would wake up in a panic, but I was too tired to get up and shaky. Roughly 5-7 times my heart was skipping while I was trying to sleep. The last time that I woke up, I decided to get on up and go to the bathroom. While I was sitting there it skipped hard. I try not to let my health scare me, but this was one of those moments where it got to me.

October 19 I was scrolling through my social media and saw one of my family’s food from their restaurant. I was feeling much better and ready to go on a small trip. I messaged my mother saying that I wanted to go to the restaurant she was telling me that granny was talking about the day before. In my mind, I thought it would be a great trip. I was all for it. I commented saying that I wanted to travel Sunday and that I’d drive. She responded laughing, saying that I wasn’t going, and I was trying to figure out why. That day I was supposed to travel down to my first college for their homecoming weekend but because I was being cautious on asking my mother for gas money, I let that trip go. I explained that to her, but she insisted that I wasn’t going because I hadn’t been feeling well. She explained that unless someone else was driving, I wasn’t going. But in my head, I don’t need anyone to drive for me if I am well and excited to go on my trip. They can ride with me but I’m driving. I explained to her that I was going to enjoy myself when I was well, and not well. She then attempts to tell me what a smart move for me would be. Not to be funny but, I know my own capabilities. She said that it was not smart for me to be taking trips until we found out what was really going on with me. Then she said, “Don’t forget who is letting you drive their car.” After she said that, I was furious! My thoughts were, “If my health was anything like hers, what if they don’t find out what’s really going on for 20 plus years? Was I supposed to not go anywhere until then?” I would say that that was not a smart move on top of reminding me of whose car I was driving. This was not how I imagined enjoying my 20s. Originally when she said I could take trips I was ill. I felt like I was being set up for failure. If I would have been stuck living here by the time I got to her age, I would be trying to re-live the years that were taken away because of her fear. But to conclude the conversation to avoid an argument, I said, “K.” with a period behind it. I normally don’t use punctuations or the letter K unless I’m beyond piss. Only a few people know that but since I did say K., she said, “Thank you and I love you.” But I’m looking at it as, she was saying thank you, but I disagree with everything she just said so I responded, “I love you too.” I made sure I had that period behind it.

A conversation my mother and I had of Oct 21st was a bit strange. We were talking about my first love who we all know by Thomas at this point. My mother has never had a problem with him but to my surprise our conversation revolved around him not being the one. I was telling her how much he has grown and how mature our conversations were from how he used to be. Of course, I would know the difference because I’ve dated him on and off for roughly 8 years. So, I mentioned that since there had been a drastic change in conversation and actions, it seemed to be legit. To officially know, I would have to date him again. I don’t know how the conversation came to this, but she then replied, “All I know is I see your dad in him. The only difference is he is trying to take care of his kids.” Of course, I took a moment to think on what I just read. My response was that I don’t see that. He was never with a lot of women, nor does he use women for money and materialistic things. She said that I was not around him like that to know his every move but she’s not talking on that level either. At that moment I was lost within the conversation, so I kept going for clarification. I was explaining to her that I knew enough. I didn’t have to know his every move but she’s always making assumptions and hasn’t been around him at all. I literally laughed.

She then replied that we would never see eye to eye on any of my relationships. She said that it was not what I wanted to do, so no matter what she said it would be irrelevant. She can only go off things that I tell her. I tried to explain to her that I don’t share everything because she typically goes to the extreme and says stuff that’s never true. She has also tried to tell me things that they never do. So, of course we won’t see eye to eye. Just like I’ll never see why she does what she does with her relationships. I knew it was more to the story, but she must realize neither one of us will tell ever detail that’s neither one of our business when it comes to our relations. It’s so much that will never come to light. But her input of Thomas being like my father was far left. I’ve seen guys out here who reminded me of my father, and he was not it. Her favorite comeback was always saying how parents see things. She said, “Cause sometimes as parents we see things that you don’t, but I’m not getting ready to get into no long texting with you on this. Then you start saying things about me that’s not true. It’s more like an opinion or maybe something that you said to me and I’m making a comparison. And as far as me and your dad’s relationship it’s nothing to hide. It is what it is. He couldn’t keep his dick in his pants.’ For 1, I already knew this but you have expressed the problem you had with my father but that does not relate to Thomas. This does inform me that you still have a problem with what happened in the past that you haven’t really let go. But My response was, “No, I say the truth. It’s just stuff that you don’t realize you’ve said or did all those times. Granny just told me to let it go. But when you do something that triggers all that, then, of course I bring it up. Just like when granny does stuff, and you tell her about herself. You know well that she is not going to remember. But a difference between what you argued is, Thomas can keep his thing in his pants and is not “trying” to take care of his kids. He takes care of his kids. There is no comparison. Dad was just one of those who wasn’t there just yet. Parents can also be biased sometimes.

She responded, “Well, since I trigger stuff then don’t talk to me about it. It seems that your granny is the best person to discuss things with.” Instantly I began typing my response saying, “I don’t talk to you. The stuff I’m talking about is random. Not necessarily a point but it just comes in regular conversation sometimes. But wouldn’t you want to know if I felt some type of way about something you did that hurt me in the past? If I could remember, and I want to discuss it with you. The issue is, you just don’t think you said or did it. Then it comes down to you not wanting to know.” So, she responds, “Basically, you just want me to listen and not comment. I expressed to her that I would rather it be a mutual conversation. You must understand that I am not making it up. I’m just old enough now to have a voice because I don’t want it to just be on the back burner. If I can release it, I would want to do it now in hopes to help with my own journey for the sake of my health. I don’t want to explode in the future. I want to be a peace but if you don’t believe or want to discuss it then by all means just listen. I felt like this would have been the true turning point within the conversation. I did not say anything that was harmful or hurtful. I just really wanted us to be able to discuss these issues mutually. Some might ask, “Why are these conversations through text message?” Sometimes the best way to communicate is not face to face because with my black out anger and homicidal ideation anything can happen. With her mental statues she might have an episode. I would rather be miles away unless we can have a discussion instead of a loud argument that continues with her cutting me off and getting her point across. So, the conversation turns into her saying, “Well apparently when I say something you get all defensive and don’t know how to take what I said to you. Then you try to come for me whether you are aware of it or not, and I am not going for it.

I had a lengthy response of saying, “Yes, you wait until we are at places like the doctor’s office to say stuff and I’m like mama why? Sometimes it’s something that’s so small and irrelevant you tend to blow it up. When I don’t want it to be big, just a regular discussion and/or when it should end, you don’t end it. It’s always overdrawn, just like with the butterfly shawl. “Mama come on, just do what you do with it, let it go.” I said that 5 or 6 times and you continued. I was never mad. I was hurt because a lot of the time, I’m never able to get you what I want to get you. I’m not able to get what I need because I just can’t on my own right now. But when I saw that, and it was something I could get, my face lit up and I was like this is what I want to get for MY MOTHER. Just a little token. I was so happy to bring it to you. And to hear you say all that you said, broke my heart. I was already depressed and in a bad place about everything that was going on within and around me. All I wanted was to see you smile at least. But that wasn’t the ultimate middle finger to the face. You said that you were going to return it and exchange it for something you can wear. That did it! So, I asked, “Do you tell other people when they buy you stuff that you are going to return it?” She said, “No.” I went to that bathroom and cried. Being mad was never it. Hurt, was all the way it, and you wonder why I’m defensive? It is because of stuff that I’ve gone through that I try to let go. I can’t help that it’s coming out without a filter. I’m tired. She said, “I’m sorry if I hurt your feelings about that.” I just expressed to her that it did hurt! She responds with an “if it hurt my feelings” as if it was up for debate. She continues with, “I was looking at it at another viewpoint. You don’t have money and it could be used for gas. Yes, I liked it, but I was also looking at is as something that was going to just be sitting in the drawer. So, if it was something that you were getting me, I wanted to be able to use it and not be sitting in the drawer. Wish you could see things differently and not be hurt.” I responded, “Again, you never said anything about gas money. You know I’m in school for the next 3 years and I’m going to need gas regardless. I spent $20 on your gift and if I didn’t get it, I would have seriously spent that money on food.” I almost did spend it for lunch the afternoon of my grandmother’s birthday, but Ezra paid for it. So, my second response to her was, “Some things don’t need a different viewpoint. A lot of stuff just needs to be at face value and that’s it. I wish you could see that. You’re analyzing to much when it’s not needed.”

Sometimes I feel like things could be simpler. I’ve been here for her for more than anyone could ever imagine. I’ve helped with bills and that’s plenty, but I still just wanted to give a token. She insisted that I shouldn’t tell her what to analyze or how to analyze things when she knows what’s more important. Apparently, only she knows what’s more important. I also feel like I’ve never thrown anything in her face. Being asked to help pay for bills is not something that any kid wants to do. However, it has always been me and mama, so I’ve never had a problem with taking care of us and then she has health issues. The thing is, paying pills to me, is also not considered a gift or token from the heart. That is taking care of business regardless of trying to enjoy your own money being a kid, teenager, or young adult. Especially when they are not my bills and I’m in college trying to live my best life. That’s considered a duty of taking care of home. Who would want to see their parent struggle if they had it to lend? Most importantly if you were raised in a close net family then it doesn’t have to be explained. Sometimes I just want to give. For me, the little things are what have the biggest impact. But for the most part I wasn’t understanding how my mother knows that she over analyzes stuff and now she has an issue with me saying it. We’ve had family discussions about this and now it was a problem. In my head what was most important to me was my happiness.

She said what she thought but, that was not what was going on. She then called me. I didn’t answer because she was most likely going to get loud. I just didn’t want to have the conversation anymore. She messaged me back saying since I couldn’t answer to stop texting her because she wasn’t doing that with me! So, I told her the truth that I wasn’t going to answer the phone because we would both get upset and I was fine watching my cartoons. Somehow from there, she jumped to being a dictator. Her message read, “I need you to move back to McKendree. This is my last time telling you this. If you cannot move back to McKendree then I told you, you can move back home and commute to school. If you decide that neither one of those options are suitable for you, then you can let me know what you think, and I can tell you what’s going to happen.”

I kid you all I can’t make this up. I was in deep thought. Why is she giving me options? Then the main question was, “If I didn’t like either one of the options, how could express to her what I want? Clearly, she had just said that even after that, she was going to tell me what was going to happen. I could have sworn I was 21, in school, and married. If I was indeed taking care of business when it came to school, being at my appointments, and in my life, then, why do I have to do what you want me to do. None of that would have been beneficial. I am close to school because it is easier than driving 30 minutes every day. I have split classes so in my free time where am I supposed to be at? Practice doesn’t start until later in the evening. So that means after practice I would have to drive back to East Saint Louis? Don’t forget when my health does clear up, I have 6am practices. Seems like she wants to create more issues and it doesn’t make any sense. Ezra’s mom stays roughly 5 minutes away from the school. I’ve always been welcome. The thing is, we’ve already discussed why I was there in the first place, and she left it alone. Suddenly, we were having this discussion again and now it’s a huge issue. I take it that my mother was in her feelings so the only way she saw fit to handle the situation was to dictate what I can and can’t do. So, I reply that I did not move away from my apartment. It was because we were babysitting her nieces. I didn’t understand why she thought I moved initially. She was acting as if I left campus because it wasn’t a good fit and I’m not happy there. We were just babysitting. After they were gone, I would be back to what I started. She said, “The thing is you disregarded our whole agreement about you going back to school. I said, “Because there weren’t any. You won’t let me be happy and live for me. It’s always what you want, and I got to do it just like in this message you just sent me, “I can tell you what’s going to happen” can I just live and manage my issues without control?”

I would have preferred regular parenting. A little guidance and advice when needed. I’m always questioning her motives. She tried to tell me what I should do like I don’t have a mind of my own. She then used that against me by saying that I came to her with what I was going to do when I went back to school. She said, “Maybe I keep saying things to you because right now you are acting like some poor helpless uneducated being.” To clear up some things, I learned a while ago that for me to get to where I need to be in life, there are things that I have to say to keep her from holding me back. So, when she speaks on agreements, there were things that she wanted me to say I was going to do. Not things that were genuinely on my heart. It was always all talk. I will never understand her and apparently, she doesn’t know me because if she did, she would not be a stressor in my life, and I would be able to talk to her and we resolve problems like adults. I must keep in mind, misery loves company. But no, I did not respond to that last message because it would have not been nice.

On Oct 23rd, I was faced with another stressor with my mom. It never fails. Once we were at the oncologist office, we were just having a mutual conversation. I was about to head back to Ezra’s mom house to get some stuff before I went to class. Should have known this would have been an issue. I made the statement suggesting that if anything ever happens while I’m out hanging at her mom’s house, I should make sure you have the address. In my mind I was thinking about health reasons. She expressed that she did not want the address because I should not be there. I was only saying if I was there visiting, and something happened to have the address just in case. She then went right back into dictatorship mode. She said I had two options. I can go back to the apartment and go to school, or I can come home and commute. At that moment I was already stressed because of them explaining to me at the appointment that I needed to rest my heart. On top of that, it was too early, and she was trying to go there. So, I calmly said, “Nah, I’m good.” I then walked to my car. I sat there for a minute because again, I’m trying to figure out when did my life become a dictatorship. When did she become so out of order? It’s like she has nothing, and I am the only thing that’s still alive. But these actions don’t make me want to stay and have the relationship that we use to have. It makes me want to give her everything that she has given me and disappear. At least then my happiness would be a priority.

On Oct 31st, I had another line of appointments for my health. This was my cardiology appointment. I’ve taken so many stress tests that at this point I’m literally hoping that they find something. Once I was prepped for the test, I began to walk on the treadmill. Everything was good at first, but the doctor wasn’t understanding why my blood pressure was increasing as much as it was while we were continuing to walk at a slow pace. After the three-minute intervals my blood pressure was extremely high, and I started not to feel good. I told them that I had a headache, and my legs were trying to give out, so we stopped. Once I was off the machine, my blood pressure was still high. So, the nurse gave me ice water to try to help catch my breath before I left. Of course, the scan came back that I was perfectly fine, but no one could explain why my blood pressure elevated so quickly. The doctor and I discussed that my symptoms weren’t an actual source from my heart, but he constantly asked me questions pertaining to the 24-hour heart monitor. Periodically my heart would speed for no reason even while watching tv. After mom and I left the office, and we were in the parking lot she asked if I was hungry. My first thought was I shouldn’t go anywhere but back to the apartment. But I let my hunger for a free meal get the best of me. I then agreed to go to breakfast with her at one of our favorite places.

Everything seemed to be fine. I was trying to have a casual conversation about my health, but her response had nothing to do with what I wanted to talk about. She said, “We have so much to talk about!” I look at her confused because we really don’t. So, I ask to know what she was talking about, and she immediately gets on the topic of my wife. At that point in my life with my health being unstable, and my wife being the person taking care of me, helping me complete my homework, making sure I’m caught up with assignments and in class when I can, I flipped out! She began to explain that I should be divorced right now and I’m not sticking to what we agreed on as far as what I should do with my life. She then said that I’m ungrateful because I have been putting my happiness first instead of how she wants it to be. For the first time in my life, I am really over my mother. For some reason even after saying that, I believed that my happiness matters but, she insisted that it wasn’t about happiness. I then tried to keep my voice down as I explained to her that there was never an agreement in the first place. There are things that I have said to her just to keep her off my back daily. When my health is not in the best terms the last thing I need is her riding me. Until I can get away from her, I play the game. But at what point does the game end. It has always been a problem when it comes to making my own decisions in the time that I make them. When my plans don’t align with hers, then I’m not making smart moves, but my plans have never hit me back in the face.

Only when I wait and align with hers is when I get played in the future. So, as I’m explaining to her that it’s my life and I can make changes however I please, at a pace that is for me, I can feel myself experiencing a black out episode. I literally have a split second to decide if I want to end it now and suffer all consequences or hold on to the little peace that I have left. I was trying my best to contain all the negative energy that she was feeding me and has been feeding me throughout my life. The scenarios began to play from every angle of how her death would play out. I’m so tired of trying to play this game and live in my own skin. I immediately inflicted the pain onto myself to divert the situation to something else because I’m cursing at this point about how I wish I never got sick a SEMO and had to come home. I never wanted to come home because of always being controlled and feeling like I couldn’t do anything on my own. Mom had to know it all and show me the way. So, I immediately told her that I did not want her dictating anything in my personal life or in my life period. Suggestions are okay but at the end of the day I live in this body, and I must make decisions myself. I can’t believe I’m still having to say this after being married, moved out, and all. I figured with the language I was using because I was trying to contain the unknown beast that lives within me would trigger her. She then puts her finger in my face and says that she will fuck me up! For some reason that was the highlight of my day. I laughed at it and immediately told her, “Not even.” The moment she thought that her little temper moments steaming from a family member would be greater than 3 years of black out anger, homicidal ideation, and the knowledge that I broke my own stress doll, was simply hilarious. I fear myself half the time. Shit, I don’t even know my own strength so blackout me is not something she would want to experience. I wouldn’t even want to witness what it looks like full on but there’s always that one person that thinks it’s a joke.: It’s not that bad” she explained to me. When I was explaining the beginning of my episodes while I was in school, she didn’t take it as serious as she should have. To me, that’s some bullshit. There is no way that my child can explain these horrific events that are playing in her head, she’s on all these controlled substances that aren’t helping, and believe that it isn’t that bad. The conversation is then put on hold and silence fills the booth.

The tension is still strong, and I know the people behind us are probably trying to hurry and finish their food so they can escape. I’m always hurt after these conversations because even though I love my mother down to the core, I don’t want to feel like I can’t be myself or make decisions for myself because the only thing that matters is her. While we were sitting there in the moment of silence she says, since you are grown and you don’t need me in your life, you can return that car back to me. I wanted to destroy everything in my path because my apartment wasn’t on campus, I needed my car to get to classes, get to my doctors’ appointments, and just in general. I can feel the tears trying to escape my eye sockets, so I head to the restroom to call my grandmother. I didn’t know that they had already discussed that she would have this conversation with me, but they only agreed to not bring up personal matters inside of the doctor’s office. However, any conversation that is personal and could indeed go south should not be held at a restaurant either. I told granny that she said that the car needs to be parked at her house and that I have no way to do anything. Once we left, I headed to Ezra’s mothers house to unload the car of all my belongings, I called my best friend to trail me so she can bring me back up the school. I dropped of the car and that was it. After talking to granny for a couple hours, I found out that my mother told her that I said I didn’t want her in my life at all. I tried to explain to granny that I only said I didn’t want her being a dictator in my life and that I didn’t want her trying to run my marriage. But it wasn’t too convincing to granny because she kept saying stuff about it and I was pissed all over again. I’m so glad that it’s way easier to talk to granny than my own mother on any day. We then decided to come up with a plan so I could get to where I needed to go. I had an appointment that Friday and my mother told me that if I didn’t come down to her house so she could take me that I was going to have to use my insurance for a Med Car. The issue was, they require three days in advance for a med-car and she took my car the day before my appointment. So, I was forced to be in her presence, and I did not want to. After that, I talk to my auntie about the situation as well as everything else that had been going on throughout that entire time. Her and granny offered to lend me their cars until my mother decided to give me the car back. I felt that if I was in the wrong and I needed that tough love that she kept talking about then the family would have been on her side. They would have not provided me with their cars to continue to try to finish out the semester strong with the health issues that I was having. Life at that point was so unstable that I was unsure if I was going to set up my classes for the next semester.

I had already missed day 1 of advising. But I ended up setting up my schedule and just letting life run its course day by day. After another day went by, I asked my mother for the car back and she gave me rules for getting it back. She said I could only see my wife on the weekends, and she can’t come to my apartment on the weekdays because she felt like she was distracting. She said that only I can drive the car even if my health is bad, my wife can’t take me where I need to go. She replied saying, “All I want is for you to finish school and pursue your track. You may not agree but I’m just looking out for my child.” I have nothing to say so all I asked is that she comes to get me. Of course, here comes another message that I did not read but, for the sake of my story it reads, “I’ve been in the bed all day, so you have to give me a minute. Liah please don’t mess this up. I really don’t have a problem letting you figure things out on your own either. I’m not going to have my child disrespect me no matter how they feel about if I’m being wrong about my decisions or opinions about their decision making.” I seriously question that message ‘til this day but any who my response was, “OK.” As soon as I got the car back all communications to her were cut damn near off. Everything was back to being smooth. It was never just dealing with my own life problems. It was always my health, then she throws a ball of fire at my life, and it just becomes dark for months until I act like I’m all for what she wants again. I couldn’t imagine the feeling of just living for me and being happy with my marriage. Who knows what it feels like to make progress in life on their own terms? Everything that I’ve done thus far revolves around making immature decisions and disrespecting her.

Almost a month later, my wife and I got in the car with my mom and of course after all that mess we went through, my wife didn’t have anything to say to her. She has been a huge influence of why we have so many external issues in our marriage. We weren’t struggling as bad as the beginning, but we were still trying to figure out how to continue to enjoy being married to one another without the constant arguments from my mother. After the outing was over, I received another message that read, “Ok, well you know how I feel about a person entering my home, car, etc. and not speaking. She used to speak and now nothing. I really be trying to work with a person but that is so disrespectful. So, that’s why I asked you first was she herself before I drew my own conclusions. I know you are trying to get through school, and I want you to, but I also must look out for myself. I can’t be around her. I love you but I can’t do her anymore. Sorry….” I swear we laughed so hard at that message. After everything that she’s been putting us through trying to make us divorce, separating us while in school, and causing my health to decline more than it already was, who in their right mind as far as a significant other or even the person you are doing the damage to would want to speak to you or be in your presence. It was like she didn’t realize that she was the fire. Mom has been the issue for a while now, and yes Ezra did cause some issues with her own mental hang-ups, but mama was going hard. Only thing is mom felt disrespected because Ezra didn’t have to answer to her, she’s her own person. It was hard for Ezra to have to watch me go through mama treating me like that. It was sad honestly. Many times, she had expressed to me that if we didn’t tie the knot when we did, she would have left because of the way mom treated and talked to me. Not because of any problems that we’ve had. There was no time to address our issues because mom created so many. Ezra really wanted us to make it work. We’ve fought in tough storms and made it through, but moms’ dark cloud was too much to bear.

The holidays were here once again, and Ezra and I decided to do a Thanksgiving split where we would spend time with my family then spend time with hers. I had already let her know that we were hosting a special event, but we couldn’t visit her family first because their dinner started later than ours. Everything was cool and as the night grew later, she received a message that her family dinner was just that. They were having dinner and immediately after the holiday was over. So, she was trying to make a move right then and there. She didn’t have a car so it wasn’t as if she could go, and I could join her later. The issue was that we were getting ready to start the special event so I rushed to find granny to tell her that we needed to go ahead and start because I would have to leave. She left to go get things in order. However, 30 minutes later of waiting we were not starting anything. Ezra became really irritated and began to get a bit demanding that she was ready to leave so, we did. Once we made it to her family’s home it was over. She was able to see her family, but her mother was ready to go to bed to get ready for work the next day. I wasn’t used to gatherings like that, so I was uncomfortable and ready to head back to my own. I didn’t want to miss what was going on because I knew that it was going to be amazing. Ezra wasn’t ready to leave, and I wasn’t going to come back and get her that was just too much driving. We stayed until everyone was gone and when we finally made it back to my family’s house, it was all over. I had the worst feeling ever because I missed an important part of our holidays for a gathering that didn’t have any type of a significant impact besides family coming together. That was fine and all, but I was upset.

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, it was time to prepare for my first collegiate meet since 2016. I was extremely nervous but ready to make my move. Seems like when it was time to perform in the meet, I choked. I placed 5th in shotput and 13th in weight. I wasn’t too hard on myself just because of everything that had happened, but I knew I had to grow into the competitor I once was. After that meet, it was time to finish up the semester and continue to monitor my health. Then, my cousins mother decided to make Christmas cards for the entire family. I was interested in what pictures she used because I didn’t remember us really taking a big family photo. To my surprise they did all of that after I left so I was not a part of the family picture for the Christmas cards. I was back to being hurt and I just couldn’t split another important holiday like that especially if we are having special events. I know that everyone’s family does stuff different, but I come from one that when we gather, we always have a good time from beginning to end. We don’t get all out of hand when we are together. Being around the “dynamics” of her family was new and weird for my liking. I did not mind being around because this was the family of the woman that I loved, but I just didn’t feel the impact of a family when they had gatherings. It was just off.

However, I ended the semester with a 3.5 grade point average and thought that maybe I could continue to be that college student athlete I had started out to be. After Christmas break, it was time to focus on all the upcoming meets and I also had a few physical classes that came with studying for a degree in Exercise Science. Meet after meet I was progressing significantly. The next meet on January 18th, I placed 1st in shotput and 6th in weight. This was a very special meet. I was going against all the old schools that were in the division for D1 and the conference for my first college. One of my competitors from the state meet couldn’t believe that I was there. Her eyes were big, and I could see the same fear that she had back then, now. I had looked to see what her throws were, and they had surpassed mine by a lot. But as I began to get in her head with the same tactics I’ve used since I became a thrower, she just was not able to produce to the point she placed 5th.

My first weekend meet January 25-26, 2019, I placed first in shotput and 2nd in weight throw. The second weekend meet, my family came to support me. I had the privilege of throwing against a World Champion Master Thrower and the founder of the throwing camps I went to in high school. My old coach for middle school who I won two state titles under was the official. Then, my very old throwing mate who was like the male version of me, was also there competing for the college he attended. It was like a big family reunion, and I placed 1st in both of my events. I felt like I was living the life of an athlete surviving off pure strength and muscle memory with no weight training. I was evolving into what was looked upon as a superhero and practicing as if my life depended on trying to mask my issues to look normal. It was always a part of the agenda. But sometimes superheroes face battles that they can’t overcome.

 As I was getting ready for another indoor meet on February 9th, I was having complications because the ride to the meet was uncomfortable on my hips. We had small vans that did not allow me the space to stretch out. As I got to the meet, I tried my best to warm up everything and to stretch. As I was doing so, an old competitor of mine from D1 who’s a professional athlete was also competing. I just knew she was my competition, so it was time to show what I was made of. Yea, I forgot in that moment that I was not in my prime. I looked like I was a nobody and threw out my hip. I messed up so bad that I was no longer liable to compete. The trainers said that it was bad, and I couldn’t lay on my back and raise my hips off the floor. I was the most embarrassed little broke up athlete. I ultimately knew this was not good and I backed out from the competition all together. There was no need to attempt shot put because why would I risk trying to make myself paralyzed. I was defeated with no way of surviving that injury to continue competition. After I returned to the school I couldn’t walk without assistance and my hips would not allow me to take full strides. I contacted my doctor, and she suggested a cane until I could fully walk again. A cane? How could I possibly be in school for exercise science, have different gym classes, participate in track, and be disabled? None of this was making sense and I couldn’t make it to classes because my mental was disrupted. I was dealing with too much and now walking with a cane. My grades dropped significantly. It wasn’t because I didn’t finish all the work, but because for that school being absent ultimately messes with your grade regardless of all work turned in. The teachers weren’t like the ones I had my previous semester, they had their rules and they stuck to them. This meant I had two options, fail, and switch majors or drop all my classes and leave my scholarship where it was.

I decided it was best to call it quits. I finished another semester with a 3.5 and those bad grades didn’t exist anymore. Now that I was immobile, I had to figure out what I was going to do. So, I withdrew from school once again, turned in my track uniform and I was again disappointed in myself. My world, no matter how hard I tried, was a shit show. As I left the track house it would be the last time, I stepped foot on that campus. Months went by of trying to get my walking in order and it was hard. I then found out that the head coach and the throws coach had been fired. I seriously wanted to know if it was because of my departure. But the cut eyes from everyone looking at me being so young on a cane was piercing my heart. There were days where I would try to fake the funk and walk distances without it, but I couldn’t walk normal strides, so I was behind a lot of the time. But Ezra and Kay (poly partner) made me feel better about my situation as if I was a pimp with two women by my side. Everything was smooth with the whole idea of poly until things started to go downhill. I mean passed any downhill we had gone through with Ezra. She wasn’t keeping up with her hygiene, she wasn’t telling us what was wrong, she wasn’t cleaning up behind herself, and she wasn’t trying to do better.

After 6 months of dealing with the cane and trying to handle the poly relationship, I decided that I wasn’t going to be on a cane forever. I ended up getting a position at a warehouse but left it because an old friend of mine needed help at the nursing home she worked at. She was the boss over activities and desperately needed an assistant. Though it was a big pay cut, she needed me, and I was there for her. There were a lot of things that went on in the nursing home that were inhumane. I was never trained in how to do my job, I watched a Code Blue go horribly wrong, they tried to give me my friends job, they were rude and mean to the residents, and I could have killed a resident because I wasn’t aware of dietary plans. I just wanted to get up out of there. I felt bad for my boss but when a nurse says, “What goes on here, stays here”, that’s when you vacate. But I did miss those residents. I did so much for them that the nurse wouldn’t. I just wish nursing homes were better for our elders and for that experience was the very reason of why I knew if I went back to school my degree would be in healthcare.

After a while, it was becoming too much on me and Kay to continue to take care of Ezra. She could not contribute at all, but she would tell us it was okay for us to go out without her. To me, I felt like if we were kicking it without her then what was her purpose? She saw it differently, but I didn’t think that was a good idea. But any who, since we were staying with Kay, and she had a roommate, I offered to help pay for bills just in case there was a spike. When her roommate saw the bill, she immediately felt some type of way and asked that we would leave. The crazy part was that her roommate had practically moved in with her boyfriend her and was never there. Even though we established that we would pay, her roommate was jealous of the relationship we all had. We found out that she as well she low key had a crush on Kay so that was another issue.

We agreed that we would vacate the apartment. I went back to my house and Ezra went to her mother’s house. Kay and I really wanted to figure out what was wrong with Ezra, so we called for a relationship meeting. My plans for the meeting revolved around having a breakthrough into Ezra’s mental to see if she was her present or past self, hopefully resolving some issues, letting her know that we were both there for her, and then ordering food to relax. That’s not at all how it went. Once we arrived, Ezra had her best friend on the phone because she thought we were going to gang up on her. Kayoko was present because she was a part of our relationship. Ezra’s best friend was just that. Not long into the conversation, it was heated and all parties who were in a relationship were not discussing anything. I found myself yelling at her best friend who was speaking on behalf of my wife. He was extremely misguided into what was going on. He suggested heavily that he knew everything that was going on in our marriage but was choked up when I asked if he knew she was not herself when she came to visit him the night before he went off to California. With her illness, she is viable to tell information in a way that can only be half that truth or maybe not even the truth at all. It was what her brain would piece together. He was so clueless. After several times of trying to get her to hang-up the phone so that we could all discuss what we needed to, she didn’t want to, nor did she talk or open her mouth to intervene. At that very moment as I fought back my tears, I told Kay I was ready to go, and I left without looking back. This was the hardest relationship moment I have ever lived through. As soon as I made it down the street I busted into tears and Kay was so upset with the way everything unfolded. I had my confirmation that there was no saving my marriage. It was dead.

 Hours later, Ezra and her sister came to the house to pick up the rest of her belongings. I didn’t want to talk about anything, but she brought up the conversation. After we were all done talking Ezra looked at me and said,” Well I feel stupid.” I laughed and said you are, in my head. I was not happy with any of it. I was also not at ease just because she finally got what we were trying to do. We were genuinely concerned for her wellbeing and yet again, her best friend had control that he should not have had, in her decision making. Again, why are you taking advice from a guy who hasn’t had a successful relationship. I mean he was trying to save and be in a solid relationship with a crackhead and trying to give my wife marriage advice. That does not make sense. Then my wife wanted this poly relationship. It was all her idea in the first place, yet she was the most jealous, the most inconsistent and the most unreliable to help with anything. Yet we were still here trying to make it work and she had proved again that it was not worth trying to save. So, as she left the house feeling better that she understood what we were trying to do, Kay and I had decided that we were done. I set the date for the end of the marriage for the day I would leave for whatever college I was going to, and she said that she was going to move with her best friend out in California. I was perfectly fine with that because they deserved one another. He was captain save a hoe and she fit the description of a person who was in dire need of saving. She also tried to revisit the conversation to get me to understand his viewpoint and I just told her what she wanted to hear. At that point I no longer had a heart, an ounce, a sliver of love for her. It was all dried up. Oh, and I missed the argument where she basically snapped on me saying that she didn’t remember the important conversation we had about how our marriage should be as far as communication. She then threw in my face that I was too traditional for her because I wanted stability and one day kids. I guess she missed the point that stability is the foundation, and we should have been building from there. But she just went all out, and I had now whole heartedly realized that I had wasted so much time on a person who never deserved any of my time. She deserved what she had to deal with in her life. I know that may seem extremely mean but, my heart was used. I felt like I would be hurt for a while, and though I had to learn my lesson, the only part I appreciated from the marriage was the people I met through her.

After finally realizing that I would never return or try to make my marriage work. The worst day of my life happened. I remember on Sunday June 23rd, 2019, I was spending time at Kays apartment when I received a phone call. Sometimes I can feel when terrible events are about to happen, and this was that moment. It was my mother, and she said the nursing home wants all the family members to get there for great granny. I was distraught. I hurried to get clean and got clothes on. I told Kay I had to go immediately. I was hyperventilating and I knew the drive was a bit long considering I was in the neighboring state. I ran to the car, put on my seatbelt and kept saying, “Granny, wait for me to get there. I’m on my way, just wait for me to get there.” I didn’t care if the police clocked my speed. I was not stopping and no car ahead of me was going to slow me down. I was bobbing and weaving in and out of traffic going as fast as my car could go. The pedal was on the floor, and I didn’t even care if I died trying to get to her because in that moment, I would be with her.

 I was halfway there and received another call saying that she was gone. My mother knew that I was driving reckless, and she was praying for me the entire time. I was still in disbelief because she was supposed to wait for me. When I pulled into the parking lot of the nursing home I parked and hurried inside. I was hot, sweating, and all over the place. My grandmother met me there and we walked back to my great grandmother’s room. There I stood. She was gone from her body but still nearby. As soon as I looked, I couldn’t stand it anymore. My heart left me, and my physical heart was shattered. Beyond granny and auntie. I was the only one there and I felt like that spoke volumes as to how I felt. She could no longer physically see me graduate high college. She was the last of my elders that I watched out for. What was I to do? I watched out for my granny all the way until she left heading to the funeral home. Deep down, I really wished that when she got there she woke up and I could see her again. But she never woke. A lot of that time I suppressed my feeling towards her being gone because I knew if I dove deep, I would never come out. It was so much deeper than everything. Would she visit me in my dreams? Is my mind clear enough for her to visit in my dreams? Can I just see you granny one last time? My last time seeing her was her funeral day. Granny looked good! She was now fussing with great grandpa, and it was time for me to achieve getting my degree at high college. I never understood how or why my drought was so long. I prayed that the biggest blessing would come. After 4 years of unfortunate events, I didn’t see how I was physically still here. Most people would have called quits. I have had to live with the fact that I haven’t lived as an adult at all. I’ve been constantly trying to play catch up with school, goals, and life. Once again, I am again drastically altering my life, escaping my reality, and making moves that I don’t even know if they are sound anymore. My impulse was to make my great granny proud but deep down I was just living in a shell of my former self with no way to get back to my happy place.

It is vital that I hit on the topic of childhood crushes right before I jump into where I decided to go to school. A twist in judgment is where vacation bible school starts something extremely unexpected. I had gotten the number of a young man, who back when we were extremely young, we had crushes on one another. Since I was just exiting something hard, I jumped hard that this was my sign to be better. My thought was to see where it would go with a guy who loves the Lord as much as I do. I really didn’t have to catch him up too much on me because he knew a lot, but I would have to explain my marriage and health. We texted all day and all night for days just catching one another up on what had been going on. I was crushing all over again. I immediately texted my aunt thinking this may be the one and she was rooting for it. But no rush, just casual catching up and the occasional flirty message. It was nothing over the top because when I rush into things, they don’t go well. I just didn’t want to make it awkward, but I found myself looking for him every time I would go to church just because of how much we clicked through our messages. I wasn’t trying to make it seem obvious, but people are always looking for something. I don’t think anyone thought anything of it though. But just keep in mind that there was this guy and maybe I thought it could work one day.

After contemplating, I was trying to figure out what school I was going to go to. Sergio was eager for me to start school down in Louisiana. He wanted me to either be close on campus or to live with him while I attended school. I was a bit hesitant jumping the gun to move so far, but I did put in applications to the schools as well as reached out to track coaches. However, I received word back from New Mexico where a coach I had known from the throwing camp was coaching. I remember back in 2015, she was smooth with her case of trying to get me to come down there. I remember when she handed me her card she said, “When you are ready to throw for real, you know where to find me!” So, I was like well shoot, let’s make this happen. However, my family was not happy with my decision to move 14 hours away. I had just got off my cane and decided to go on a track and field scholarship. I’m pretty sure they thought I was out of my mind. I really was! But I remembered having my conversation with God and this was His decision. No one else could tell me otherwise. What He has for me is not for anyone else to put their two cents in. I was extremely tired of living and I was not afraid to let that be known. But I had to realize that every move I made was a move closer to the bigger picture. In my head, I was going to drive down there, that way I would have had my car to do what I needed to. I had already lived on a campus twice without my car and being sick. It did not turn out well. So, if I had my car this time, I would be a bit better. However, since the car was still not in my name, my mother had power to attempt to use that against me so I would not take the trip to New Mexico.

Here we are again, no matter what I try to do to better my situation, people who don’t have to deal with what I am going through are trying to control my decisions. I don’t know about you all, but I’m getting tired of telling my story of my mother throwing in my face about having to be dependent on her. I didn’t ask to have these types of health issues and I was already dealing with the consequences of not being able to care for myself with them. So, to have her clearly state her position of being over me but then throwing it in my face was dead. All I knew was the conversation I had with God, and it was the only conversation I was going to listen to. If I couldn’t take the car then somebody was going to take me, and I wasn’t going to stop asking different people either. Sometimes things must happen in the order in which God opens those doors. I wish other people would realize that their thoughts, motives and thinking especially opinions do not matter in the lives of others, they are to be focused on themselves daily. I’m not saying you can’t be concerned or suggest things, but, when you flat out start trying to control people because you don’t have a sense of control in your own life, that’s when we have a problem.

Since my family wasn’t going to take me to school, even though I signed my national letter of intent, accepted my scholarship, and was packing my clothes to move, I reached out to my dad to see if he would be a part of this moment in my life. I was on edge considering he was missing in action for literally everything, but he was my only hope. At that point it was a done deal. My mind was made up and all I needed was my dad to finally follow through. I didn’t know that my mother had already planned, with my granny, to take me to school as a backup plan if my dad would have not shown. Honestly, I expected them to be my first plan instead of having to do what I did. But on the real, my dad pulled up and I’m pretty sure my heart lit up just as it did when I was a little girl. As he and I loaded up my belongings, I knew that it was time to begin a new journey. I was up to drive to my new destination.

Before we started driving the stretch, we filled up on gas in the neighboring state as well as his wife wanted to use the bathroom. I was rolling on the highway for the next 8 hours, and we got food/ snacks from the gas stations that we stopped at. After that, my dad and his wife split the remainder of the ride. Once his wife took the wheel, it was pitch black. We were in the middle of nowhere but close to New Mexico. There was a car that was behind us that was trying to keep up with us, so she started speeding to attempt to get away, but they sped up to keep up with us. No matter what she did, they were following us. I was scared and then she ended up not seeing that the road curved and she slammed on the breaks and swerved. Instead of the car going around us they waited for us to start driving again. Like, who does that? There was nowhere to stop on this stretch because it was basically the middle of nowhere. Once we were out of the dead zone, we pulled over to stop at a gas station. The car following us ended up continuing to go but, it was creepy. After all of that, we arrived at the school early, so we went to Denny’s to eat. We still had a long time to go before it was time to check in. We slept in the car because dad and his wife didn’t want to pay for a hotel.

 As the hours went by, it was time to check in and I was eager to get things done. I ended up doing research before I went to see what the team looked like and who were the seasoned throwers. I ended up seeing the guy who was the top male thrower which caught his attention. Once I got my keys to my dorm, and my free laptop, it was time to get everything out the car. It didn’t take us as long as I thought, but it was a tiring process. After we were done, I thanked my dad and his wife for getting me there. It was now time to set the standard. I had my schedule set for my first set of classes. When I went to my orientation for the School of Business, we were told that all of our business courses were only 8 weeks long. Only our general courses were 16-week long courses. I was soo excited! This was where I needed to be. I honestly didn’t know there were accelerated schools like that. I was surely winning. Everything was falling into place.

Once classes and track came around, I was like a little happy camper. My body was healing after practices, I was able to lift, it was great! The only downfall was I was not able to run as much as the coach had planned. My knees weren’t that great. I opted for strengthening exercises and it worked wonders for my pop. After a little while, I started having feelings as though my health was trying to interfere with the plan. I randomly went to my advisor to attempt to shorten 3 to 3 ½ years of schooling into a year and a semester. When we looked up available options, there was one that was quite hard, but she told me if I could do it, then I could be done in the time that I needed. The plan was that I would need to duel enroll into an online school. Basically, I needed to take as many business courses as I could without failing to meet the requirements of the number of credits, I would need at the school to graduate. I figured I would have one solid year of track so that’s all I needed. It wasn’t an NCAA D1 institution, so I didn’t feel the need to want to live out all the 7 seasons I had. I also felt as though my coaching would be extremely limited just by listening to my teammates.

After I figured out what I needed to do, I didn’t immediately make moves to pay for the classes, but I just knew I had the plan. I was still going to classes and going hard in my sport until I started having complications. It had gotten so bad that I had to make an appointment with the clinic to get prescribed high blood pressure meds. If I wanted to be cleared to participate in track, I had to take the medicine as prescribed. However, I not only needed those pills to be able to do track. I felt like God was giving me those pills to keep me in line with the curriculum I was getting ready to do. I feel like it would have been the death of me without them. Which reminds me, before I went down there, I was given a CPAP machine because out of nowhere I was diagnosed with sleep apnea. I died again. One evening I was doing some work and I fell asleep. I forgot to put my CPAP machine on and there I was for the third time. I was at the same place that I had gone both times from alcohol poisoning and from the doctor upping my medicines the way he did. When I arrived in that dark place, there was the same hand pointing back the other way. I bet that hand is tired of sending me back, like geez what are you doing? This is the third time. When I woke up once again, I felt like I had just been given the breath of life and was scared out of my life. The entire time just knowing that I was on the pills, my mother wanted me to stop everything and come home. I told her that this experience needed to happen. I was told to come to that school by God and I listened.

I then started a journey of what seemed to be impossible. I reached out to my family to see if they could help pay for the extra classes and they were 100% supportive. Sergio was also supportive, and he had provided what he could. Kayoko was also extremely supportive. She would assist with after hour meals since there was only one café on campus and the restaurants were a drive away. I didn’t have much money, but she helped when she could. My track mate Merald could feel my pain, she was super supportive, and we talked about everything. She looked up to me when she needed advice and I was always there for whatever she was going through. Slim was my main man. I swear it was like we were inseparable. He knew a lot about me, and I knew a lot about him. We clicked as soon as we were introduced, and he was my gentle giant. The young man who I was interested in, who was the top male thrower, was like a giant bear. After I really figured out how his brain operated, he was not my type. Merald asked if she could date him, and I said sure, but beware, and the heart break began. Ida was another homegirl, we would talk all the time and we also shared a few classes. I was down anytime to help her with schoolwork. Katy was like the mama of the group. She was super sincere, and Roy was about his business but funny as well. All my thrower buddies kept me going and I appreciated it. Throwers that I’ve met throughout my collegiate career are the bomb. It’s a different type of love and trust.

Now it was time to expand my brain into something that seemed to be a fun game while others thought it was a suicide mission. I started with taking three additional classes online with my full schedule. I finished them rather quickly. I figured I would just cram all that information into my head, and I would pass with flying colors. I then wondered if I could have my family support me for more. The classes weren’t super expensive, so I was going to try my best to make it happen. I then added two more classes and I finished those in a couple days. After that, I added two more classes. I had started my period when I started the first three classes and I thought it was going to be a normal cycle, but I wasn’t on my period. I was bleeding because I was overstressing my body to the point that was its way of releasing the stress. However, I continued to put that stress on my body because I needed to get done with my degree. I was scared that I was going to have to start over again and this was my best bet into completing high college. So, I bled out and added more courses. Meanwhile, I was still attending all my practices and staying up late with my friends, making Walmart runs, eating cookies and just enjoying my time. They knew what I was doing, and they also knew what my body was doing. They checked on me every waking moment, but they supported my decision. There were times when I let them read parts of this book and Merald bursts into tears and couldn’t finish it, but my journey will never end so I added more courses. Every couple of days I would send my family my grades from those courses because they were paying for them. I was completing full 16 week or 8-week courses in 2-3 days. I was basically killing myself to make things happen in my favor. Again, I added more courses.

When I thought I had taken my last course, I was at 9 courses completed. One of my classes I was in on campus was easy, but no one would show up. My teacher wanted to do all the actively engaged activities and had us answering questions, but it was only two of us. I told myself when I entered college again, I was not doing all the work or answering questions. I just wanted to do my work and carry on with little to no participation. Before I made my decision to drop the class, I made sure it was offered online. I also made sure I didn’t go under the amount of school credits I would need to graduate. Once that was good, I went straight to my advisor after her class and immediately dropped it and called home once again for a small payment to take that 10th online course. I passed it in a couple of days and was now officially done with what I could take. It was almost time for Thanksgiving break, and I had slowed down from bleeding because I was at ease with the courses.

 Right before break we had individual meetings with the coach to basically check in. I had a list of things that I wanted to discuss with her because she wasn’t coaching anyone. She was not the same coach who told me when I was ready to throw, come to her. I felt like I was at a dead end with her, and I didn’t want to give her or the school satisfaction or recognition as I did with my previous school, and they find out it’s a load of lies. As I entered her office there was no talking to her. She had a justification for everything that I told her. To the point where I had no faith in the program. All I wanted her to understand is that she can indeed push her athletes without them not wanting to be a part of the program. As I talked to my teammates, I was under the impression that in high school we were all told that college sports would be tough and that we should prepare ourselves for that. A lot of them said that when they got there, it was less than their expectations, so they got used to the less than stellar coaching. I also felt as though she needed a strong coaching staff because she couldn’t be everywhere at once.

What bothered me most was that she would cancel practice to go march for some cause or if she was present for practice, she would spend most of the time on her phone. She was so excited to have me, but she wasn’t coaching any of us to the best of her ability. I felt as a team we are only as strong as our weakest, and she was the weakest. I would never ever want to be a part of a team and I’m the only one who would qualify for the meets. What type of program is that? Then we must raise money to get to the meets that she scheduled yet one person would go? It was a mess, no one felt like they really trained to be prepared for competitions and she really didn’t care about indoor season. It was all about outdoor season and the conference title which was piss poor. I could power throw and win that. Her focus should have been giving her athletes the opportunity to make it to the real championships or exposing them to NCAA training, meets, or just anything of that nature. Show them that no matter the division they can compete. They never had a chance, and I wasn’t going to be a part of that so after that meeting I was iffy on continuing to be there.

I just wanted to come home to be around the family after stressing myself out. I also wanted to be in attendance for my churches concert. I knew it was going to be epic, so I didn’t want to miss it. However, no one was willing to come get me. I mean I get it; it is a 14-hour drive but I felt like they didn’t bring me so they can come get me. The flights were a bit much, so I knew that wasn’t going to be an option. I searched high and low until my dear best friend said that she and her cousin would come get me for break. I was super excited, and I owed her a lot for that. When they pulled up, they were lit! I so eagerly grabbed my belongings and rushed to the car. After my best friend used the bathroom. It was my time to drive, and we first went to the gas station to pick up a few snacks. It was raining a little bit, but I was on a mission. I could have drove the entire way while they slept since we did a turnaround but after about 6 hours into the drive, they wanted me to switch out. On that drive I had already decided that I was more so not wanting to do track for them, so I smoked to relieve all my stress on that drive. I remember us stopping early that morning to get breakfast at McDonalds and they gave us our food for free. It was like the perfect time, and we hurried up, got back on the road, and continued our drive back. Eventually, I could tell when we were back in Missouri because those people cannot drive for the life of them. I don’t see how people willingly live in that state. But close to home we were, and when we pulled up to my mother’s home, I was happy to be here.

 I was ready to see everyone including my church crush. I remember he messaged me that he wanted me to come over to his mother’s house just to finish catching up and I was gone like the wind. I stayed over there for a long while. We were discussing his upbringing, his views on marriage, family, and other things that I was concerned with just because my family knew a lot about the “dynamics” of his family. I just wanted to hear how he viewed certain things and ultimately if his mind was in a place that was on the same page as me or if he had been damaged. There were no red flags just yet, but I still had my eyes open for a few things. Once I left to head home, I felt like maybe we could potentially have something. While I was away, our texting became a bit more exclusive, so I had hoped this was maybe a good start. But I did not want to rush, so I tried my best to keep it cool and under control.

There we were the day of the concert, and I was super amped. I got the chance to see the rest of my church family as well as my crush. It seemed oh so good, yet my oh so good moments sometimes turn sour. Everything was good. The concert was lit as usual, and I didn’t expect anything different. The next day my family was going to take me back to school. My granny and aunties were driving so the night before, I messaged my crush so we could hang one more time. He came over a little late but the time we spent was good. I then acted off impulse and engaged into something I shouldn’t have. It wasn’t anything like I let him take my virginity because never, but it was unexpected. So unexpected that afterwards he immediately was ready to leave and talking about how he doesn’t allow his feelings to be feelings. Ah! There’s my red flag. As he was getting ready to leave, he hugged me and said, “I don’t entertain my feelings.” That resonated with me that night because I knew it was something and that brought it on out.

I left it alone for a little bit but then I wanted answers. Answers that he wasn’t going to tell right away but I continued to just monitor his actions. Those actions spoke louder than anything he had to say. I found out rather quickly that he was all talk and not as mature as I thought. He was also trapped by his trauma and somehow made it good. I mean we all can grasp the positivity or lesson learned but that just was not the case. I was intrigued so I wanted to know more. I purposely wanted him to come over just so I could figure out and put things together. Yes, deep down I may have still wanted to try but at face value he had already expressed that he felt we weren’t compatible. So, I headed back to school with a task on my hands, but I also had weight on my shoulder about staying home.

 I was now contemplating life. I was undecided if I was going to stay or leave until my grandmother was telling me that she was going to get ready to rent out the house. In that instance my heart sank to the floor. That was my home and my safe space, and I felt no one was worthy enough to set foot in there so I decided to leave. I was coming home for my home. Track was no longer important, but that home was everything and I never told anyone that that was the real reason why I left completely. I told my coach, my friends, and my mother that I was coming home, and I was going to continue school online. My degree was an online degree anyway. So, my mother drove those 14 hours by herself to get me. My coach said that she would honor my scholarship and she hoped that I would be able to figure out what was going on with my health. My friends were extremely sad but for the most part after completing 46 credit hours in one semester, I was an incoming senior and that was all that truly mattered to me. When my mother officially arrived, we started loading the car. I had help from Slim. My other teammates got the chance to meet my mother and wished me off. After we took off, we stopped for dinner at a nice spot with some good food. Then I drove the entire way back while we had a mini concert in the car with all kinds of music down to the Wheels on the Bus.

After Christmas break everything was good. My classes were set for the entire year, and I would be done in Dec. of 2020. I remember in January Slim from New Mexico reached out to tell me coach had quit. I wasn’t surprised but he said that she basically told them that none of them would ever be professional athletes. I wish someone would have told her neither would she. Nor would she be a professional coach. From my time there and witnessing what I did, she was the letdown, not the athletes. But I guess that was her way of trying to make herself feel better. She was trash for saying that, but I didn’t reach out to see if it was true. I just wondered why every time I would leave a school, the coaches either got fired or quit. It was highly suspicious.

Moving on, I had been talking to my crush and decided that I wanted to see him again. He said that he wanted to as well, so he would let me know that day when he was on his way. Welp, there was another red flag. He never showed, never messaged me to let me know, and wasn’t man enough even the next day to say that something happened. Now that was the image of my dad. I left it alone and 2 months had gone by before we spoke again. We did not discuss anything that happened. We only talked about what was going on in our lives. It was a positive message thread for the most part. He explained that he had been chilling and was really trying to focus more on God. Instead of pursuing is music, it was all about work, school, and God. After that we just talked about school, and that I was almost done. I had 7 classes left and he was proud to see that I was making a move. We also discussed how I decided to jump back into the work field. I was back working at warehouses, but I was eager to work back in the healthcare field.

 After a while of texting, I randomly asked him if he had been talking to anyone yet, or if he was still focused on him. This was the reason why he said he didn’t want to date. Suddenly, he types, “Yea I have a friend now.” He then explains how she was cool though they weren’t rushing. Then, he asked how I knew. I just gave it to him straight. We all go to the same church. My family already knew that we had been seeing each other and talking. So, for him to suddenly show up to church with a girl, I immediately received messages from them. Then he proceeds to say how I don’t really like him like that. I then reminded him of all the time I spent when we first started talking telling him that I did. Let’s not forget what we did. I see another red flag. He then tried to apologize for leading me on, but he was ultimately happy that I still supported him. I never understood how a guy can want you to sit there and tell them in depth how you feel, and they know damn well they don’t feel the same. He had the audacity to get upset because I chose not to tell him in the first place. Then he tried to play the victim by saying because I was holding in the information it was not worth telling him. If I had a dollar!

I expressed to him that he had someone that he was interested in enough to bring to church. What more can he do with that information? He then comes back with telling me if I ever need anything he would be there. I responded, “Tell me how you are going to be there for anything that I need.” He responded that he was there for whatever I needed help with or anything that he was able to assist with. So, I texted back, “In general if I needed you, how could you assist with that?” He was confused so I said that I needed a true answer as to why someone else became an option over me. I wanted to know if I scared him. He was like no and he explained that he had known her for a long time, and he questioned me asking if he was scared. In my mind, I wanted to know how long of a time. I really wanted to know if they were talking when we started talking. So, he then messages back that he thought I was attractive, super cool, and down to earth but he just didn’t think that we were meant to be together. However, the last time I asked him to tell me how he truly felt about me he said that he didn’t entertain those types of feelings. I still don’t understood why. He never really explained how he automatically knew we weren’t meant to be together. I felt like there was no chance given to even explore the possibility. We went on zero dates, no outside interactions and there was nothing to really go off on in explaining to me how he felt we were not compatible. He instantly laughed and was like, so you think it takes for someone to date to know if you are not meant to be. He messaged that it wasn’t like he was against hanging or linking, he just thought we was busy and wasn’t able to make time. But he never asked, I was not busy, but I did bring up him not showing up and he said that he thinks something popped up, H said that it was his bad he should have told me. Another red flag on the play.

I entertained the conversation to further explain what dating was because most people don’t know what it means to date. It was a rather lengthy message, and his response was that he just didn’t think too much of it, He was just caught up doing other things but then he contradicts himself by saying that he knew that dating informs a person if someone is for you or not. I responded by saying I’m never too busy to make time for someone I am actively engaged with. We as people will make time for people if they are worth it. But I was over the conversation at that point and sent my happy for you message with a cheers. I was just trying to keep it casual if we ever talked after that because something was wrong with that boy literally. We kept our conversations casual for a while, but he was neglecting his health. He was not eating for real, and I really felt bad for him. But days progressed and we were fine with holding just casual conversations until we got on a topic of me living in my home alone and not having to worry about having clothes on. Well, that conversation turned sideways but I mentioned that the conversation shouldn’t because he was talking to somebody, He went on to say that I didn’t want to show him what I was looking like because I wasn’t naked. So, I challenged him and his faithfulness. I know I was being bad, and I should have left him be, but I invited him over. Of course, he didn’t come at that moment, but I knew he was going to eventually. He took himself home and I played games hard. I had nothing else to do so why not?

I took a picture of a face and body towel on the sink showing him that he could have been showering at my house. I left that towel there and we continued to have casual conversations. After that he started initiating conversations and asking questions. I was shocked. By that time, I was wrapping up classes and getting ready to start new ones. I didn’t have many in that semester, so I had time to entertain. Then that message I was already expecting came through. Days later he randomly messaged that he needed to come through to see the house. He started asking what days I was off. He said that he had to come by and chill. Later that day he said that he needed to take a shower and I sent him a picture of those two towels still sitting there waiting for him. He was convinced that I had just put them there, but he could have compared both pictures if he wanted to. Then he was like, I know those towels been sitting there for a minute. He claimed he wasn’t trying to let them get old. He said that he was going to get them. I chose to continue to entertain the conversation. He talked a big game, but he never showed that he could back any of it up. I found it funny to continue to entertain in the first place. I guess something was wrong with me as well, but we know that (chuckles). But this time if he did come over, I wanted something in return.

 I had a feeling, because of those feelings he didn’t entertain, he was going to run away. So, we talked about some in depth things that I wanted to do, and he had never done these things or really anything at all. I’m slowly finding out he knows nothing about the female body. But I’m the virgin? So, we get back to me trying to understand how he is willing to do all these things, but he doesn’t want to date to see if we are compatible. He then says that I’m attractive, but that he’s talking to somebody else so how could we date? My mouth is wide open at that point. I messaged back like that’s just like how are we involved in sexual activities? That conversation was pointless. So, he said that I was right which is another thing he did often. Everything that I said he agreed with even if he contradicted himself, he just agreed with me and that was exhausting. But then that victim role appeared again. He said, “If you say it’s pointless, then it’s pointless.” Anyone reading those messages would have left him on seen but I responded, “Yea, because the conversation should not have gotten that far, and it was long again but I’m just saying dude. You are talking to somebody therefore, even if I initiate a sexual convo, you should shut it down or if you really did want to be with her then why do you entertain me?” None of it made sense. If I felt like I wasn’t compatible with someone I would not continue to make room for them. But he was on board with leaving the conversation alone, but he kept trying to make it out like he was just responding to my conversation and then apologizing again. So, I’m like if you are agreeing to the conversation, you are giving me the impression that she was no longer apart of the equation. He was like, “Awe na we still do, and I didn’t mean to give you that impression, but it’s cool I got it.”

After a while, we went back to having casual conversations. It was complicated with him having a rough patch of death in his family around April 2020. I wanted to be supportive and check on him. Then as days went by, he was trying to come over and eat dinner. Yes, once again, I entertained. I guess I just had time because it had been two months of red flags. So, I randomly expressed to him that I feel some type of way so I’m going to handle my business with being sexually frustrated. He said, “Why would you take care of that issue alone when you have me.” I laughed so hard I almost rolled clean out the bed. I felt so sorry for that poor girl. I engaged in the conversation asking how I do have him? His response was that he would l like to do it for me. It was crazy because what he wanted to do was something that he told me a while ago he didn’t know how to do and hasn’t done yet. I guess I wasn’t enthused because I fell asleep on the conversation, but we talked the next day and he admitted that he was trying to come through. I told him when my next off day was, and he said that he is going to slide through. He talked about how he could take a shower and all. He hyped himself up in the messages saying he had all these skills and how much confidence he had. In my mind I was like, “We shall see!”

Another day goes by, and he was waiting for me to get home. He was asking how long it would take and all. I assumed that he slowed his road because he changed his mind. It was back to just casual conversation. Then another message popped up of him saying that he was going to come by. I sent the address again since he was acting like he forgot. This was dang near the end of April, the 28th to be exact, and here was what we all had been waiting for. “I think I’m Outside.” The entire time he was there, there were no skills shown from him. We did shower together and the exact same thing that happened the first time happened again just twice. He fled the scene in his feelings. No, I did not receive anything and again he probably felt like he was on top of the world, but I enjoyed beating records and enhancing my own skills. The issue was that I always back up everything that I say but I don’t think he could ever back anything up. I think he may have thought that he had the upper hand, but darkness will always shine in the light. The platform has opened for discussion. I mean no harm this is just a part of my story. Months of a big game of not entertaining feelings. Later he apologized again for not doing anything he said that he would because he was thinking about it too much. After that I was over the one-sided activities. He messaged that he agreed that it wasn’t right So, I said that I wouldn’t participate anymore, he agreed, and we went back to our casual conversations.

In May we just talked about how school was going. I had just finished all my spring classes and I was almost on the home stretch. I was preparing for my two summer courses. He used to always say that I was cold for having straight A’s. And my summer courses started three days after my last day of spring semester. I really didn’t have much of a break. After that, I was over playing games and wanted something real. I believe that I entertained him because it wasn’t real. There weren’t any titles or attachments. He was just occupying my time with no real consequences. Somebody to argue with, flirt with, occasionally do-little things with and not have real obligations. It was like living in my twenties during college having toxic fun. Since I really didn’t experience kinky college days at least I could trust where his bits had been. After that it was just a hey here and there and small talk until it eventually died off.

It was then time to decide if I was ready for something serious or if I just wanted to continue playing games. I knew that I had unresolved issues with Kay as well as we were still communicating throughout the months of my shenanigans. But I also felt like the type of hurt I went through with my wife, I just needed to escape into other things for a while just to breathe. Ideally jumping into something serious after that type of breakup would have been a shit show of hurt. I would have been lashing out. I couldn’t help that she was a part of the marriage. Until I had some sort of peace was the only moment when I would be able to pick up something with her and leave the marriage attachment at bay. She ultimately thought I was playing games with her because I do have an issue with being overly touchy, but I was trying to explain to her what process I needed to go through before I could commit again. She said that she understood but she would still bring it up. After a while, I figured I would have a serious conversation with her to see what we were going to do, and the big issue was if she wanted kids or not. That is a deal breaker for me, and I knew in our poly relationship she was undecided. Even then she was undecided, so I took my time before I decided if we would try again. I needed a clear answer.

As we were figuring things out, I had two jobs and was taking on those two summer courses. I didn’t understand how I was able to function like that, but I was making things happen. I was privately coaching an athlete for track which was the highlight of my coaching experience. We were making some real progress. I just wish I could have made an impact much sooner than the time allotted to groom my athletes. Work was alright but it was starting to be a bit much with the job constantly calling my phone from all these different numbers. I had a set schedule, and they would call, text, and ask me to work when I knew that they had in the system that I couldn’t work certain times and days due to my coaching schedule. One of my clients didn’t even need a caregiver. I would sit in the kitchen listening to my thoughts for 12 hours while the kids of the person I was supposed to take care of did everything for him. They would also take their parents with them when they would leave. My other client was a big, retired theater mastermind and it was alright taking care of him. I really set the tone and made an impact because I cleaned up his place so good that everyone who worked with him even his therapist was happy. For a long time, no one wanted to clean because of what was on those things that were dirty, but I am not afraid to clean even if its poop. Our elders should be living in clean environments. My only issue with him was that he lived in a part of the city where I had to find parking that was free. That was tiring and time consuming. I then had my favorite client of all time. He and his wife were in there 90s and still moving about well. The husband needed help because he had recently fallen and broken his hip. The wife was sweet, and we shared conversations about everything. I made sure he was clean, I did both of their laundry, made sure the entire house was clean and his wife loved me. She would fix me apple pancakes and she always wanted to eat ice cream together. She reminded me of my great granny. We then shared our passion for the arts. I remember her telling me to pursue my talents because she chose the work field and when she retired and wanted to start back with painting and drawing, she was too old, and it was time consuming. She loved all my pieces and said that I had a gift. She was also invested in my degree and that I loved watching SpongeBob in my downtime.

I remember after the occupational therapist gave us instructions on helping to heal his hip, I already knew everything that he needed to do to the point that the therapist left it up to me to make sure he did everything that he was supposed to do. We had a set schedule, and we were on it. After a while, his walking increased significantly around the home, and he wasn’t really struggling with how long it took for him to make it to his bathroom. We were on the roll and then the one morning I received a call from my job explaining that they no longer needed our services. He was back to doing everything on his own. I was a bit upset but I was genuinely happy that I made a great impact to where they didn’t need the extra help. After I lost them as a client, I didn’t want to work with the other family who didn’t need a caregiver. I had a long time before I had him on my schedule, so I called in to get a new client. We had a timeline, and I made sure I was ahead of the line to drop him. But the company wanted to give me the run around. They wouldn’t take him off my schedule even though they said that they were going to. Day after day I called, and no one did anything until I was in the curve. Then they said that I had to work with him on that day since I was in the curve. I simply told them that I wasn’t going to. They knew what they were doing, and I did what I was supposed to. After I talked to several people once more, he was finally off my schedule, leaving me with one client.

While I was out working with my athlete, I received a call saying that they needed me to come in like I was on call. I expressed to her again that my client for that day was scheduled later because I had another job. I could not schedule or come in for anyone at that time. After practice, I logged into my app to prepare for work and somehow, I no longer had any clients. She took my only client off my schedule, and I was over it. I never called in to get new clients because they were just so unorganized and doing too much. I just let them eventually take me off payroll. I think deep down I was really just tired of working the floor. I wanted bigger and better roles in administration or management. Shortly after I no longer had an athlete because she was getting ready for all the other sports. I was just at a real loss, but I had to continue to make things happen. I was still taking on those classes in which I thought I was done with all my math related classes. I almost stressed my body out bad with my financial management course. I was rooting for a 4.0 and my brain would not allow me to get a B, so I was mentally hurting myself to understand the material. I even tried to pay somebody who had their degree in financial management. Guess who that person was? My old roommate from my very first college. I honestly felt like she was trying to sabotage my grade. She would say she was going to help do it and I would check, and it was not done. If I would have trusted her, I would have gotten zeros. So many times, she said, “I’m doing it now or I’m going to do it today.” But I’m smarter than that and I made sure I changed my password to my homework, and I completed it. Once I was done with the course, I showed my ass all over my social media and made sure she saw that beautiful A.

Any who, when Kay and I finally figured out what we wanted to do, we openly had our conversation. She said that she did want kids. So, my brain immediately started planning for a whole new life. I asked, because I knew she really didn’t want to stay in an apartment anymore, what she wanted to do, we agreed that we should search for a home and preferably one that had enough bedrooms for future children. The reason why my great grandparents’ home was no longer an option is because a big issue occurred. I felt that I should have had the opportunity to get or live in the home just because of what it meant to me. I’ve spent most of my adult life in it cleaning, and making sure it was held up to par. But my grandmother wanted to give it to one of her children. Everyone had their own homes and doing big things that I couldn’t do because of my health. In my eyes I felt like I would have been the better candidate. I was mistaken. My aunt Annie put up a fight that I couldn’t win. She and my uncle wanted to flip it so that granny could make money off it. I thought they should have flipped it and let me continue to live in it both helping granny and me out. After granny said that we needed to talk, I texted both my uncle and auntie to see where their thoughts were and sure enough only my uncle responded. I still had hope that they would realize that I was the better option, but we had become that family.

Prior to that discussion, while I was at Kay’s apartment, my home was broken into. They were able to get in because my suggestion of installing bars on the lower-level windows had been ignored. The house is in the hood so of course if people start seeing a young woman in the home, they will want to break in to see what I had. Though I continued to stay, it was evident that someone was watching the home. The night before the break in, Kay said she had heard people outside the home talking. I wondered if they were the ones planning the break in but because lights were on, they chose the next day. I went to spend the night with Kay, and I received a call from granny that the alarms were going off. Kay and I rushed across the water to get to the house, and we had beaten the police there. After the Police came an did what they had to do, no one was there but my belonging was gone. Out of all the electronics only one was near and dear. In middle school my great grandmother bought me my first laptop for school. The battery was dead, so I had to keep it on the charger to use but it had all my memories and older pictures on it. That just can’t be replaced. So, in the conversation it didn’t matter that I had poured my heart into the home, and it surely didn’t matter how I felt about the home. So, I wanted a home to call my own. The verdict was in that I was basically unstable, and my aunt was going to take on the home flip it and do as she pleased. I left heart broken, devastated and I felt unworthy. I cried and my mother could feel my pain. I couldn’t build wealth like they could the traditional way. I couldn’t gain access to a place to stay or a car in my name. I left school to save my chances of being reunited to that home and that was something I had to live with. My impulses again got the best of me, and I was just a lost soul. It’s hard being me and for that no one will ever understand.

When I finally began to let go of my attachment to the home, the hunt was on! I utilized one of my uncles’ friends to be our real-estate agent but honestly, he was no help. He did not listen to what we wanted, nor did he pay attention to things that we needed. There were times where he sent homes outside of the areas we chose, and they didn’t even have the number of beds and baths we requested. His response was, “Oh, I didn’t really look.” By far the worst but we just rolled with the punches. Another huge mistake he made was telling us that when we received our loan amount, we would be able to keep what we didn’t use for the house to use for buying furniture etc. There were so many homes that needed a few things fixed and he would look at the price and tell us you all can pay x amount and still have 20,000 left to make a driveway or finish the basement. I was so glad we didn’t choose those homes. But after we looked at his choices, we were not pleased. I started looking for myself and after being discouraged in what we were seeing, a home popped up in my suggested. I immediately thought it was too good to be true, but I scheduled to view it immediately. It had been a very long process and I was pooped. Kayoko was tired because of how work was going so she really didn’t want to do the work when she would get home. I took on everything since I had nothing else to do. When we arrived at the house it was perfect. After we walked through the home several times, he asked us if we were sure, and we both agreed to put down the amount that the seller wanted.

From there the process began of getting an inspector, making sure things were fixed that the inspector said was a must, and we were able to keep the hot tub. It was like what could go wrong. Everything was perfect until it was time to finish a few more documents. Since I was still married, I needed Ezra to sign one. We had not officially divorced because there was a timeline for how long a couple had to be separated before we could file and she said that when she tried, her courthouse denied it because of Covid. I hadn’t really talked to her because she was doing too much but, I then needed that paper. I didn’t think it was going to get that ugly, but it did. It was like she was just out of touch with reality still. She agreed that she would sign when I called. Then, she said she wouldn’t sign it until we were divorced. Google told her it would take two weeks so that’s what she thought. Prior to that moment, when she had started the process over the summer, and I sent her money to file, she said that the courthouse denied it because of covid. She had no documentation to prove that so I went back to see what could have happened. I wasn’t paying close attention back then, but she filed and Illinois document to the state of California. If she even filed and they denied it, there would have been documentation to prove it. Basically, I felt like she just needed money and that’s how she got it. But as adults, the mortgage company, loan advisors, as well as my realtor thought she was special for saying it would only take two weeks for a divorce. She claimed she called and asked but even after submitting the case, it’s a process before they even get back in touch. That alone can take two weeks to a couple months especially with covid. I then told her that I did not have the money regardless of if she wanted me to file that day because I was not working and the money, I did have was for closing costs. I told her she would have to wait until after that process was over and she flipped out on me.

The night before our very last conversation she decided to message me saying, “You do realize that if not wanting to be with me were true you'd be making sure the divorce happened. So, at this point you're only proving me right. If you truly didn't want to be with me. You would be putting effort into making sure we weren't married. You can say whatever you want, but your actions will always show the truth. Okay, good night” I finally realized what I had married. I married someone who wasn’t capable to grasping simple concepts. Once I had emotionally separated myself from her all the blind love stuff was open. I was able to see who she truly was. I was witnessing why my baby cousin was afraid of her and what she and my uncle sensed. She would always cry every time Ezra was around. It was evident and I was super happy to not be a part of her life in that way because she was killing me literally.

The next day she tried again to make me feel some type a way as if a divorce wasn’t the priority. She insisted that she had the upper hand and was trying to throw things in my face. I highly believed that I had hurt her feelings. So, she proceeded to say, after I told her I would get back with her on how the process worked, “Okay, you know what, no. I'm not waiting until this shit is convenient for you. I did that our whole relationship and for the past 5 months. A divorce doesn't take long when we don't have anything to split. I told you two weeks because that's what was told to me. Then it was rejected, then on top of that covid happened. So, since you want to play games, waste time and be an unreasonable bitch for no reason. When all I'm trying to do is make life easier for both of us. Keep that energy, honey. We're married for life now. When people ask why, be sure to tell them about your previous unnecessary behavior. As if asking to help us get out of each other's lives is somehow unreasonable and should only happen when you decide its important enough in your life. Funny, how you weren't an asshole when you needed me to sign that paper for your house. Which is a pile of ashes now. And you wouldn't have needed if you would've done the papers months ago. Remember, we're married whenever you make your next legally binding decisions. Bye now, and don't bother replying because I'm blocking your number.”

I laughed so hard because we all know if one party refuses then the other party can be granted the divorce anyway by default. All the messages were proof whenever I had time and the funds to do so. But it was the fact that when she wanted to file, I provided funds but when I expressed that I didn’t have none or my funds are limited she never once said, “Well I’ll help split the cost.” Some type of individual she is, and I sacrificed a lot for her. Whether she remembers or not, I will forever remember and carry PTSD from it. However, I don’t hold anything against her. Her life is already enough, and she will deal with that for the rest of her days.

After she said all of what she had to say, our loan advisor had already changed things around so we would start closing costs without the signature. Of course, that meant taking my name off but who cares we still got what we wanted. We were really going to have a home that we could change to our liking and raise kids. I was the happiest person alive and for the first time in years, I could openly express my happiness. We were moving places of where I could only dream. Shoot we had a hot tub!

Shortly after, I was a bit stressed because it was time to really focus on my last five classes and prepare for my capstone presentation that was in December. The house closing date was Oct. 2nd so everything was pretty much in order. I no longer had paperwork to fill out since my name was not on the house so that took a huge load off my back. I still had to remind Kay of a few things to do so she could stay on top of her business with the house. Other than that, it was smooth. The previous owner treated us well. She paid our down-payment, paid the taxes, as well as paid for us to have a warranty. All we were waiting for was the amount owed at closing and hopefully we had it.

A few days before the date we received a call telling us the amount and it was time to make our grand move. I was on Kay about when she was going to pack her belongings but she insisted it wasn’t a lot so she would start after closing. Her lease was going to be up at the end of Oct. so I figured, if she did it right that would be enough time, but I also feared she would still say she was tired after work, and we would be overworking trying to get stuff done the day of. But I didn’t say too much because the day of closing was approaching.

That morning we did our last walk through to make sure everything that we asked to be done was done. It all looked good, so we were ready to head to sign the papers. Our realtor only met us at the home, but we had directions to where we needed to go to sign papers. When we got there, we were super excited yet nervous. As we were seated, the lady who was going over everything did an excellent job with explaining each document. I wish I could have been a part of the process instead of watching it, but the bigger picture was life was getting ready to pick up pace. Once we were done and we had the keys I immediately called my mother to tell her it was a done deal, and we went to pick up granny first then mama to drive to the house. Once we arrived granny was confused and when we broke the news, she was excited and wanted to see inside after she took several pictures outside.

I seriously thought this was my end game. It was time to make the house it our new home. We immediately started with upgrades and Kay needed to get a car because there weren’t public transportation destinations close. She didn’t have a way to commute so we asked my mother if we could move in for a split second while our guy was painting. While work was being done Kay could save to get a car. In November we were making moves and we could see things changing to our liking. Then, we figured out our guy didn’t know how to do half the things that he said he did. We chose this guy because we saw his work from the previous apartment Kay had with her roommate so, we kept in touch. I felt bad because I was going to use him at my previous home but that did not work out. I should have paid attention to all the signs of him not being able to start on a project because when he got to ours, he messed up floors, doors, and some smaller things. The only thing he did somewhat right was the painting. He’s a painter only and he needs to stick with that as his everyday job. But we should have known because the first day he didn’t come with a contract, so I drew one up on the back of a piece of paper, but we also knew he had a funeral that day, so we were still trying to give him a chance. We should have reconsidered and never reached back out. After a while of seeing significant progress, I was no longer employed due to Covid. We then decided that the next step would be to stop all work until we would be able to pay him for his work. However, before we could, he wanted to slow down because he was hired at a new position and needed to do work for them. In which it was great timing so we let him know that we would pause work until we could pay him. Since I am about business, I knew that if he continued and we weren’t paying that could hold up if we ever had to go to court. I was aware of everything and had paper trails of things we were not happy about. When we discussed these things with him, he decided to get an attitude. An example would be how he treated installing our carpet.

He didn’t measure anything for us, so we had the numbers, but the carpet place didn’t cut us the right amount. Instead of this man calling us to tell us it was not the right size, he waited until after he attempted to install and sent us a picture of all the cuts he had made. We immediately called him to ask why. He said that it was not big enough so he went on YouTube to see how he could install. I was heated and told him that he should have called us before he cut up our carpet. He started talking over me yelling that it was nothing else he or we could have done. But I kept talking as well because we could have taken the carpet back to get the right size and paid for the exchange. But the carpet was cut into like 4 different pieces, so it was a bust. Once we were able to make it to the house to see the carpet and the kitchen floor, He knew nothing. The kitchen floor was the right size and he had so many cuts that were visible, uneven and it was just a mess. The padding under the carpet did not reach the ends of the room so we could feel the nails in the floor from the parts that go around. At that point we were over it. So, we sent that we no longer wanted his services, and he was mad. But how could he be mad at us when we’ve lost so much money buying our materials that he destroyed. Make it make sense! We then gave him a date and time to get his last payment and to give us our key. We had already changed all the locks so if he didn’t give us the key, that was fine as well. The morning of the transaction we were at the house waiting for him to arrive. He didn’t show at all on time so after a couple hours we decided to leave to run some errands. Since he didn’t communicate to us at all, we figured it must not have been important, so the last negotiation was his lost.

Another hour passed and he called furious. He said that he was busy. Every time he would lie, he would end of telling the truth as the conversation continued. He was never a man to begin with. After he was dealing with some internal issues of yelling and talking to himself about how we were going to see him in court, we knew he wasn’t going to take anything to court. We already knew he was a felon, but people like him deserve chances, right? We had already seen the three mugshots, so the police were the last people he was going to talk to. After we told him that we sent specific instructions, he then told us the truth. He said that he was out with his kids all night, so he was sleep. Again, that was not our issue. When properly handling business there was a time given and that’s it. He then said that we were kids and started cursing us out and saying how he was going to burn down the house. It’s funny to me because I don’t mind sending him back to jail and I certainly didn’t care about those kids. I felt for them because their dad was uneducated. They had no good example to look up to. He was a liar, money hungry, unprofessional, and unworthy of being given a chance to work for anybody. When I had all the pieces together, I realized why he couldn’t keep a job and why people didn’t want him working on smaller projects beyond painting. My mother ended up grabbing the phone because she is tired of hearing him snap and we’ve literally been quiet the entire time he was taking. I swear he was having a conversation with himself. My mother tried to get him to be an adult and have an adult conversation and he blew up again. He then lied to her about not having that other job. It was hilarious because I am in a black business group for the area and his picture popped up with that new company. I had the picture in my phone of the post that was made. His issue the entire time was he felt like since he was older than us, he should have had the upper hand in ending the conversation, but he couldn’t manipulate us because we weren’t dummies. Someone should have advised him that he couldn’t spit game to someone who was days away from their Bachelor of Business Administration. I honestly wanted him to take it to court, wanted all of our money back. I knew we had the upper hand and documentation to prove our case plus a witness to his ignorance. The pictures of the floors and doors alone could have won the case. We would have applied pressure that would have put him out of business. Mama then deemed him a lost cause and told him he could get his money and he needed to come now. She initiated the transaction because we were not so nice. You can always tell when people know when they are wrong. When he got out of the car, he looked like he had entered a deep state of depression. He looked so sad as if that was is last option for funds and now was lost. He spoke to my mother like he had some sense and went on about his way. After all of that we were exhausted from the interaction but happy it was over. Seems like when we try to give people a chance and they ruin it.

Any who, I couldn’t focus on that issue any longer because it was over and irrelevant. It was then end game of trying to prepare for my capstone. December was here and I had to present my business plan like my life depended on it. My professor was extremely successful with business ventures, so I really had to have my numbers in order as well as my power point and plan. When it was time for my presentation, I grabbed his attention as soon as I started. Once I started talking, it was as if my nervousness disappeared. I was talking about my most significant passions for our elders. I was able to answer all his questions and that craziest thing happen after I was finished. He said, “You really touched my heart with your business plan. I was thinking of my mother who passed not long ago, and I feel as though if your plan was in place here, she may have still been here a lot longer.” He explained how she didn’t have places to go to be social at her age and she was lonely a lot of the time. He couldn’t always be there because of his many occupations and after a while she basically withered away. He was so touched and eager to know that one day I would successfully bring my business plan to life. I was grateful to have nailed it and he also said that there were only a couple of small areas that I needed to fix. He said that once I made the corrections needed my plan was golden. He knew that I would be ready to talk with investors or to fundraise. When we were finished with the entire zoom meeting, and I pushed the end call button, I felt like the world was off my shoulders. I had followed through regardless of my health complications. I had made things happen not only for me but for great granny. I was officially done and graduating Summa Cum Laude from high college! Was this my moment to begin my life on a happier path? Was this the beginning of having a more significant impact within the healthcare field? Was this my time to finally be able to look back at all I’ve gone through to realize this was just my story unfolding? Or was this just another coverup that worse was to come?