



an anecdotal collection
of failed first dates,
relationships, and
romantic encounters
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PREFACE

I loved writing this book. Conceptualized over a year ago, I finally started my outlining process in Fall of 2021. With a release date of Valentine's Day 2022 in mind, I slowly chipped away, story by story. At first, it was strictly comedic, sharing outrageous dates and romantic (or not so romantic) encounters. Many of these stories were buried so deep, and writing not only reminded me of how far I've come, but also the lessons that I've collected over the years.

I want to be crystal clear, this book is not about men; it's about growth, mistakes, happiness, sadness, stories with no endings, stories with terrible endings, but most importantly, new beginnings. I never want to ~~blame~~ give credit to men for the person I've become or how I show up in this world. It's not so much about "accountability" as it is about acclaim. I celebrate the wins, the losses, and the draws as well as their influence on my tenacity and ability to thrive under any circumstance.

In reading Tina Fey's "Bossypants", she referenced conquering challenges by going *over, under, or through* them. Regardless of how you've overcome your past relationships, I want to remind you to be kind to yourself and always look for opportunities to flourish. Each chapter will end with a small reflection and notes to self, as you read, please take time to make your own reflections. This book was designed to be an easy and fun read, so grab a cup of tea (or whatever else you wanna sip on), and join me on this rugged little ride.

BROKEN TELEPHONE

A three year relationship ended by way of a ten minute phone call.

Let me tell you, I was caught completely off guard, swept right off my feet, bam-friggin-boozled. In all honesty, we both knew that the relationship wasn't a "forever" thing. The topics of marriage and future plans never came up, like EVER. We were just rolling with the punches, going with the flow. I must say, this was the healthiest connection I'd ever had, open communication, honesty, and respect.

Although the final weeks leading up to doomsday were increasingly distant, I just thought, "ebbs and flows, things will naturally transition back to normal". I guess I just assumed that if it was really serious, there would be a conversation.

Day 1: SHOCK

So I get the phone call as I'm getting ready to walk my dog. I had planned for a relaxing evening; chocolate cake with a cup of tea, working on *this* very book (lol), and maybe a workout.

The call was 10 minutes, beginning to end. He asked if I felt as though we had plateaued. I replied "yes!" excited to talk about it and create a solution, we were always solution focused. He then brought up calling it quits. Dude, I was taken aback, but willing to explore. He seemed pretty unwavering on the idea of a breakup, so I definitely wasn't going to *convince* him to stay with me (Imfao, what does this look like?)

As soon as I got off the phone, my stomach dropped to the floor, I had the worst case of cottonmouth, dry af. I walked my dog and called my friend to share the news. It was a

rollercoaster of emotions, from laughing and making light of the situation to anger, feelings of resentment and immense sadness. I was grieving the inability to create any more memories with this person I had grown so close to, someone I spoke to everyday, someone I shared so much with.

Everything looked different, everything smelled different, everything *was* different; change. I instantly started gathering his items to pack up - three years worth of things and I needed to get rid of it ALL. My mouth was so dry, I drank. I HAD to keep moving, there was no sitting down. As far as that slice of cake was concerned, I wouldn't even *think* about food for another 72 hours. My mouth was dry, I drank. Auto-pilot mode is how I spent the rest of the night. I knew it was going to hit hard in the morning.

Day 2: DOWN IN THE DUMPS

I never knew that it could be this bad. Day two was filled with sadness and anger, followed by more sadness. My head was pounding, but I had to keep going, stillness was the adversary. This was the day that I was to meet up with him for the exchange. "Old me" would've dropped his things off at his house and ran away, but "new me" needed to handle the situation like an adult.

So when I saw him, I shared how hurt I was. It wasn't the breakup itself, it was how it was done. Because we were always so cool (or so I thought), it actually could've been a conversation that ended in the same result. We could have laughed about it together. Communication and honesty were at play, but respect was missing. I felt disrespected. He couldn't even look me in the eyes. Through everything I was saying, through everything he was saying, he couldn't even look at me. It was at that point I realized that the closure I was seeking

wasn't going to come from him. It was something he simply *couldn't* offer.

Day 3: GOING DEEP

You know how they say, "when you point a finger at someone else, there are three pointing back at you?" This was my vibe. I started thinking about the person I was at the beginning of the relationship and how I had changed. Ways that I could have showed up differently, more open, less distanced, with authentic love and attention. Remember that "new me" I referenced in the last paragraph? Yup, let's work towards her. Ironically, many of her traits are the same traits that I had lost over the years - like having fun, being adventurous and curious, taking chances, embracing change, dancing just because. I want her back. Admittedly, I spend so much time planning for my future, and working on my business, but it's time to loosen the reins a little.

More than anything, I was gaining clarity. Still no closure, but I was making progress.

Day 4: NORMAL-ISH?

Things weren't quite normal, but they were beginning to resemble "normal". A new normal! I've always considered myself a textbook introvert, but I really leaned on my friends. My friends are amazing. If you're one of the friends who sent food to my door, checked in on me, called me - thank you! I was finally getting back to myself, drawing, writing, being creative and it felt good.

Rebuilding my space, and myself were top of mind. Letting go would come next. It was only day 4, but everything was moving so quickly. Each day was getting easier, this is when I knew that I wouldn't hit rock bottom again.

CLOSURE

I knew there was no magical genie that was going to pop up and allow for a re-do, but if I could've done anything differently, it would've been to remix the ending. I would've held "honesty" and "communication" to the same esteem as respect. There were things during the relationship that I didn't want to communicate in fear of being rude or disrespectful. Shortcomings that made me second guess the partnership. The last thing I wanted to do was hurt his feelings or have my concerns misconstrued. If I had any say, it would've ended with just as much thought and care with which it began.

I learned so much from this relationship. So many fond memories, great times, road trips, inside jokes, deep belly laughs; all of that, I'll never forget. Delicious eats, fun adventures, birthdays, holidays, a togetherness that is now only an image.

Let's Reflect...

All in all my downfall was comfort. I chose comfort in the "now" because it seemed way more palatable than the months of hard work it would take to build true happiness alone.

I was forced out of my comfort zone. I am embracing discomfort. I'm staying vulnerable, and if I get shitted on, I get shitted on, it'll always make for a great story.

Now for some lighter stuff...

Ok Google, play "Laugh Now, Cry Later" by Drake.

SWEET NOTHING

There was this guy who worked at one of my offices, and he was DAMN fine. I only visited this office like 1-2 times per month, so seeing him was a treat. Picture this; fully connected beard, low cut caesar, body-ody-ody, the strong silent type. Every time I saw him, he was in his own zone and totally gave off the “don’t talk to me” vibe, but if you know me, you’d know that mama likes a challenge. So I did some digging, starting with one of my friends who worked directly with him. I asked her what his deal was, and why he always looked upset. Was he actually mean, or am I just reading this all the wrong way?

She instantly gasped, pulled me to the side, and started whispering (that’s when I knew it was serious). She mentioned that ALL of the women who worked with them had a crush on him, but no one knew his story. They, too, were afraid to approach him.

It was at that moment that I volunteered as tribute. Not only would I be the one to break the ice, but I would live to tell the story.

The next time that I was at the office, it was not with the intention to walk out with a stack of paperwork... oh no no no, it was to walk out with that number. I sent a random document to the printer and walked over to grab it. On my way back, I stopped at his desk and said “Hey, do you know where I can find your phone number.. I mean... a stapler?”

He was not prepared for that.

“I’d like to have your phone number”, I added (as you can see, I wanted to keep the tone profesh, stick to the bit). He laughed, and responded with those digits!!!

Can I tell you just how accomplished I felt? I had been eyeing this guy for months and BOOM, the game done changed, y’all.

The next few days were filled with text messages back and forth, he was waaaaay friendlier than I had expected. His messages weren’t bland (which was a pleasant surprise because usually the good looking ones have nothing worthwhile to say). Turns out, he had noticed me too, but wasn’t sure if I was open to Afghani guys.

Before a full week had passed, we already planned our first outing, we decided to keep it light, and hit up a restaurant called “Sambucas” on Church St.

I met him at the office and we walked over together. I ordered the Fusilli Rose and he had the Pesto. We chose a table right next to the window (gotta love that natural lighting). Everything was going well, conversation was good, food was great, we were vibing. Without notice, mid sentence, he dropped to the floor and hid under the table. I didn’t really have a physical reaction, I was more like, “wtf?”

So I leaned over (still seated), and asked him why he ducked down. Get this; he had seen a family friend outside of the window and was afraid to be seen out with a woman, let alone a black woman. L M A O.. now that I’m looking back at it, I’m questioning how I wasn’t offended. I was more turned off than anything. Culturally, maybe he would’ve gotten scrutinized by his parents, but it was the “let alone, a black woman” part of his reasoning that was gross.

We wrapped up our date shortly thereafter, and he continued to message me as if I wasn't his dirty-dirty little black secret. Although I didn't ghost him or anything, my response times grew increasingly delayed and I never took him up on any of his date offers. My office visits continued to be sparse and that was that.

Let's Reflect...

I'm not easily offended, especially in the moment. I tend to give people the benefit of the doubt when it comes to their intentions and impact. I think this is a control tactic (or defense mechanism) on my part, which allows me not to be hurt by the actions of others. If I create my own world of bubble gum and lollipops, I'll always be alright. My mind is an interesting place, not easily infiltrated. Is this good or bad?

FILTERED ADMIRATION

Sometimes I feel like the chase is everything.

There was this guy at my gym - good looking, in shape, a very tall glass of water.. I could tell that he was a little older than me, but that was completely fine, I liked what I saw, damnit.

Because I was somewhat of a ~~stalker~~ admirer, I had been crushing on him for months before deciding to pull the trigger. I was positive that he didn't even notice me, we never really crossed paths, I'd just take him in from afar.

All I knew about him was that he was Serbian and an ex pro-volleyball player. He offered personal training sessions at the gym without being an employee (which was a major no-no). Damn I love a bad boy. I longed to know more.

I'm just going to pull over for a second to thank my good friend (we'll call him Mr. A) for always riding, and legitimately being my best wingman - better than ANY of my girls (sorry, not sorry).

So Mr. A and I developed an intense scheme in which he would befriend this man and in turn throw me an alleyoop. You have to understand that this plan was months in the making, I was playing the long game. With so much time and resources invested, there was no way that I could let him slip from my fingers.

Long story short, Mr. A completed his assignment and within 3 months, I secured the digits. Conversation took off right away, there was a tiny bit of a language barrier, but baby that didn't hold us back from chatting on the phone and texting back and forth.

For the next little while, I would do everything in my power to avoid him at the gym. There was a lot of pressure to look cute while sweating, especially because he now knew who I was. We chose a day to go to the movies, and I must admit, I was pretty excited. We met at the theatre, and I could smell him before I could see him. You know that smell of mustiness doused in \$7 Axe body spray? Yup, that was the guy I had been gushing over for months.

Here's the other thing that I maybe should have mentioned earlier; I don't wear my glasses when I work out, so he looked great from afar, but up close and personal, not so much. Instant regret. I can't even remember what movie we watched, probably because I spent the entire time reciting prayers that he wouldn't try to touch me. I gave him big flirty talk over phone and text, and refused to match that energy in person.

The good thing about a movie date is that it has a hard ending. Walking out of the theatre was awkward because I wasn't interested in going for a drink, grabbing a bite to eat, or having a nightcap, but I didn't wanna be rude.

The next day, my friend (Mr. A) called me for the post-date check in. To my surprise, he was already filled in. Apparently, my standoffish-ness was perceived as frustration. The powerlifting crush thought that I was upset because he didn't kiss me. It was actually the EXACT opposite ahahahaha, I would've been mortified if he had gone in for the kill.

I let things fizzle out and eventually ended up switching gyms. For some reason, I feel like he moved out of the city, he always had negative things to say about Toronto.

Let's Reflect...

I spent months of my life fixated on this ONE dude, only to realize I didn't want him. Sometimes we draw out processes entirely too long because of insecurity and uncertainty. This wasn't about being indecisive, this was about being in my head too much to even approach this man. Had I walked within 10 feet of him, I would have turned my ass back around. Also, I have this weird thing about not wanting to be perceived as "rude". I'd rather sit in discomfort than offend someone - this needs to be addressed.

I'M EVERY WOMAN

I guess you could call this next man my “what-if” guy. You know the type. Someone who’s always been around, but the timing was consistently off? We meshed so well, and he never made his romantic interest in me questionable. His phone calls were consistent, and whenever we saw each other it was nothing but laughter and good times. So when the opportunity presented itself to explore a relationship, he was right there, ready and willing.

At this point we already had a friendship of 2-3 years, which made the transition into a relationship surprisingly easy. The first few months were a breeze, everything was on point, I was happy. Then, red flags popped up everywhere. How was it that I had such a close relationship with someone, but knew so little about them? He would disappear for days at a time - and listen, I’m no high maintenance woman.. I don’t need to be on the phone with my man all day - but he would literally go ghost and pop back up days later like nothing happened.

He would often go to work and was super vague about his employer. To this day I still have no clue what this man did for a living. Now that I think about it, maybe he was a drug dealer ahahahaha. Needless to say, after a few months of this majorly inconsistent behaviour, I wanted to part ways. By this point, I wasn’t even salty anymore, I truly longed to call the relationship “quits” and embrace a “hot girl summer”, but he wasn’t down.

Nowadays, the concept of breaking up wouldn’t even be a topic of discussion once I had my mind made up, but back then, I didn’t have this mentality. So I called him, and calmly (seriously.. calmly) told him how I was feeling and that I didn’t want to continue the relationship. He was NOT trying to hear

that at all. He had spent literal years chasing me, and was not about to let me go that easily. So with promises of changed behaviour and an agreement for better communication, I foolishly agreed to stay. This pattern would continue for the next few months. When I would suggest breaking up, he would counter with comments like “I will show up at your house when you least expect it” and “I know where you work”.

I have no clue why these comments didn't at all scare me. I never told anyone about it because I didn't think it was important. Ladies, don't let this be you.

Fed up, and wanting to leave, I needed to devise a plan. So I hit up my girl and we came up with the genius idea to catfish him. Have him build an entire online relationship with some phantom-woman, and then orchestrate a fake ass “investigation” and hit him with screenshots of his lying, cheating ways.

Men are so dumb (no shade to any man reading this).

This operation was live and in action in less than 24 hours. With a fake social media profile and a burner phone, we managed to breach my whack ass relationship with ease. It was actually hilarious to me; going back and forth with this man (my man) over text, while pretending to be someone else. Also, he never even asked for proof of identity or anything, goofy-ass. The goal was to collect incriminating evidence that I could bring back to him to serve as a declaration of why our relationship couldn't move forward. There was simply no trust lol! This was a great plan, I could not be stopped.

So once I had the goods, I confronted him.

FUN FACT: I'm one of those geeks who does improv professionally, so it was nothing - and I mean NOTHING to act the part, I didn't break character once. He never suspected that this woman was fake or that he actually planned to cheat on me with... me.

Boy, was he caught off guard, completely tongue tied. All that energy he used to fight for our relationship had suddenly vanished. Disappeared. Now that I think about it, maybe he had plans of hooking up with this online girl, and jumping ship into another relationship seamlessly.

Sucks for him, he lost two women in one night.

deactivates catfish account and laughs hysterically

Let's Reflect...

It's funny that I felt "breaking up" was something to be negotiated. Also, you can know someone and completely *not* know them at the same damn time. Never would I have guessed that this man, who had pined over me for years, would disrespect and intimidate me. I'm glad that nothing wild happened, and he never acted on his threats. Some women aren't as lucky. Beware of the obsessive and controlling ones, that shit might seem cute in the beginning, but it's not worth it.

PLAYING WITH MY LIFE

It's always refreshing when you meet someone the "old fashioned" way, sans assistance of social media or online dating apps. These circumstances are few and far between and must be handled with the utmost care.

Let me preface this with the fact that I LOVE a man who is good with his hands. A manly man, ugh, I could just melt.

I was in the parking lot of Yorkdale mall. I had made the trek solely to pick up two slices of cheesecake for takeout (yes, both for me). It was a snowstorm outside, my windshield wipers were worn down to the plastic and needed to be replaced immediately.

I consider myself a pretty handy and capable woman, but windshield wipers, I've just never gotten the hang of.

I was dreading going back to my car. I had picked up wipers earlier that day with the intention of having them installed by my mechanic. But with the weather, it couldn't wait. Safety first.

Heading back to my car, cheesecake in hand, I decided that I would watch a few YouTube tutorials and surely, the installation would be a breeze. After watching 2-3 videos, I was confident that I could get the job done. Unlatching the original wipers was the easy part, but hooking on the new ones...

I struggled for 10-15 minutes in the freezing cold - fingers numb, upset with myself for even trying. There was no way I could drive home with no windshield wipers. It was rush hour, traffic was nasty, and the weather was nastier.

I swear to you, I am not lying, the next part of this story is going to sound like it's straight out of a cheesy chick flick. A black pick up truck reverse parked into the spot directly in front of me, and out stepped an adonis. He had to be like 6'4, pronounced jaw line, a man bun (which I normally don't like, but he was working it), and buttery pecan coloured skin.

Before I could wipe the drool from my chin, he was already making his way over. "Quick, act natural", I said in my mind. So I did what any normal woman would do, I acted like I didn't see him. He called for my attention, asking if I needed help. I crumbled with relief, and said, "yes please" through my shivering lips and handed over the pieces.

He suggested that I wait in the car to keep warm, informing me that it would only take about five minutes. Those next 5 minutes were stressful af. I had to concoct a plan. Luckily, he wasn't wearing gloves and I could see no wedding ring. But that didn't mean we were in the clear. He could still have a girlfriend, right?

Before I solidified my strategy, he opened my passenger side door and asked if he could sit. Serial killers aren't this handsome*, so I said yes. Before I could move the two slices of cheesecake, he picked them up off the passenger seat, and closed the door, holding the bag on his lap.

I asked if I could etransfer him some money for his troubles. He quickly declined, and playfully suggested that I pay him with a slice of cheesecake. Quickly, I had to determine what was worth more, a guaranteed slice of Oreo Cheesecake or potential D. I guess he could see the wheels turning in my head and said "Unless one of these slices is for your man."

I told him that it was for "a friend"

I'll spare you the details, but one thing led to another and we ended up connecting on social media. His profile checked out - he wasn't super active, maybe like 5-6 posts, no selfies - a man of mystery, love it.

That same night, I got a DM, dropping me the digits. I gave in and sent a text - the first red flag was a green bubble, but we all make mistakes (sorry, Android users). He invited me over for an impromptu chill sesh. Normally, I would be like, "hell naw", but I felt like living on the edge. So I packed up the cheesecake and hopped in my Toyota.

Did I have a moment in the car like, "This guy can be a murderer. What if he's a freak?" - yes. But I followed my gut over my better judgment and I'm here to tell the tale.

His place was immaculate. A clean bathroom, bed frame (with headboard), and a complete towel set.

We chatted for a bit, it was like I had known him for ages, things were comfortable and easy. At this moment, I faced yet another ultimatum, was I to first indulge in cake or this sexy man?

After copious amounts of sweets (especially cheesecake), I don't feel my sexiest. I was abruptly taken out of my trance by the sound of plastic takeout containers being opened. Welp, guess we're eating cheesecake first.

Would fate be on my side?

He asked what I wanted to watch while we ate the cake (not *that* cake, ya nasty). Of course, I chose a crime show which naturally put me on edge. What the hell was I doing here in this

complete stranger's house? Who told me that this was the move?

At that moment, I promised the universe that I'd be more careful with my life. Suddenly, I was looking for more clues, any reason to leave.

The show was winding down, and he began inching closer to me. A "meet it and beat it", I had never done this before, I needed to think this through. Longing for a sign to shepherd my discernment. And then he started playing music to "set the mood".

NBA (never broke again) Young Boy. If you don't know who this rapper is, please Google him. At first I thought it may have been a mistake, but nope, it wasn't. Maybe he's trolling me?

He wasn't trolling. I took *this* as my sign, texted my girl for a fake "emergency" call, and got up outta there with a quickness.

Did I overreact? Maybe. Did I dodge a bullet? Probably. But I listened to my intuition.

Let's Reflect...

This was the moment that I realized the bar was on the floor. He changed my windshield wipers, for Pete's sake, that's all. Sometimes we're impressed with the absolute bare minimum, it's never too late to adjust your standards.

Standards, they're so important. There are times that I feel like my standards are too high, or shallow, or working against me to block my blessings - today this train of thought stops. I'm not

afraid to say that I will only consider men who are at least 5'10 or men who are established in their career,or men who pick up the bill on our first date.

** I'm well aware that some of the most heinous serial killers are attractive..*

CALIFORNIA LOVE

Can I say that I'm most excited to write about this upcoming story. Even thinking about it brings a smile to my face. Unlike the other anecdotes, before and after this one - I have NOTHING bad to say, it was like straight out of a fairytale, only 2,171 miles from home.

I was so excited to travel to LA for my birthday, I felt the most like myself, so friggin' secure. The day after landing I decided to go to the local car rental shop because public transportation in Cali just isn't a thing. I was staying in Pasadena and I really wanted to live out my "Insecure" inspired adventures - a lot to do in a little time.

I walked into the shop with my girl, eager to get our day started. There were already like 6 people inside of the waiting area, and no one at the service desk. My friend, well, she can be described as the impatient one, rang the bell on the counter, still nothing. She rang it again, a few more times, no response. We could see that the back office door was opened and a man was eating from a tupperware container. He had heard everything, I guess this was his definition of workplace boundaries, no work during breaktime.

Several moments later, he emerged from the office ready to resume work as usual. The paperwork was very quick, then we were to get equipped with a car. He came outside, and was even better looking in the sunlight.

Let me give you his rundown:

- Tan skin
- Neat hair
- Medium build

- About 5'10 (that's fine, because *he* was fine)
- Killer smile

Once he handed over the keys, I got this jolt of courage.

"Hey do you have a name?", I asked

He responded with his name

"Cool, cool. Do you have a phone number?", I followed up with

He laughed and knew exactly where I was going, handing me his phone to enter my info. I entered my number, slid on my shades, and headed onto the street, feeling like a boss.

I received a cute text message moments later, saying that we should connect soon.

We texted back and forth for two days. His schedule was tight but we managed to make plans for one night. He sent me the location of an arcade to meet him at and off I went. When I pulled up, he was already waiting in the parking lot. We entered the arcade together, it was pretty empty, probably 8 other people inside - which was great because we had free range of the entire place.

For the next hour we were captivated by the competition. One thing about me, I thrive in a competitive environment. We played until closing and walked out, not ready for the night to end. He then gestured for me to get in his car, he was going to take me somewhere for a surprise.

I took a quick pic of the license plate, sent it to my girl, shared my location with her, and said if she doesn't hear from me by 2am, send the troops.

The next venue was in an industrial area, just warehouses. This is when I thought to myself that maybe he was a killer. He parked on the street and told me to just trust him. We walked about five minutes, and I could hear the muffled sound of 90s hip hop and R&B music. We entered a side door and it was a bar, arcade, and enclosed patio all in one. I was impressed, old school games like Mario, Pacman, and Duck Hunt.

After the fun and games, we walked back to his car slowly, not wanting to say goodbye. It felt magical. Conversation was flowing, the air was heavy. We sat for another two hours talking, watching YouTube videos and trauma bonding (not the healthiest, but meh).

We shared stories about our upbringing and subsequently making it out of the hood. About our ambitions, where we were taking our futures, and plans for world domination. He shared that he was the main caregiver for his teenage brother and was saving up to buy a townhouse.

After a few more laughs, a small conversation about the inevitable expiration of our connection, and a passionate kiss, he drove me back to my parked car and we went our separate ways.

We never spoke again.

Let's Reflect...

This experience taught me to appreciate even the shortest connections and that some stories are best left incomplete. I don't think I'll ever forget that night.

REST & REPULSION

He was a friend I had known from high school, and we managed to stay in contact into our adulthood. Over the years, we'd run into each other at house parties and sparingly share text message exchanges for the few weeks shortly thereafter. Whenever I needed anything done around the house, he would come through and happily accept - there was definitely tension there, but we never acted on it.

One winter, on a whim, we decided to book a trip to the Dominican Republic. I one hundred percent felt comfortable enough with him to travel to another country together. When we landed in DR, everyone instantly thought we were a couple, duhhhhh. For the first little bit, we'd correct everyone, telling them we were just friends, but they'd still refer to us as being together. By day three, that shit was old, so we just let it go.

The bus ride to the resort was shoddy. We were on an extra old coach bus type thing, open windows and dingy seats. I love the heat, but this guy was as Canadian as it got. About 15 minutes into the ride, he started complaining about being too hot, and yelled to the driver to turn on the air conditioning. To his disappointment, there *was* no AC, so he got agitated and went from zero to a hundred, real quick. A cool ten minutes later, he was taking off his clothing, stripping off piece by piece. Then, the "bruskis" came out.

You know how they always give you beers halfway into your ride to the resort? Anyways, this worked as a charm to lighten his mood.

By the time we got to the resort, it was late afternoon. We rushed to our room to drop our things off and head to the beach.

I always make it a habit of choosing the bed closest to the washroom and door, for easy access in and out.

On our first night, I had trouble getting to sleep. I just couldn't catch z's with his snoring and constant nose blowing. We had never shared a room before or spent the night together, so I was completely unaware of this "condition". He kept getting up to go to the bathroom (passing my bed each time to grab more toilet paper for his snot) - so annoying. At this very moment, any chance of us crossing into the "friends with benefits" department was decidedly out of the question.

Day two, we decided to go whale watching. He was/is really into nature and instead of sitting with me, he went to the top of the boat so he could enjoy the experience alone lol. I had never been on such a small boat before, and was hit with a mean case of seasickness.

I was throwing up over the side, and I guess someone told him to come down and check on "his girlfriend". He looked at me, and said, "you look like shit", then proceeded to go back to his base on the top of the boat.

Upon safe arrival back to the resort, I was pooped. I headed back to the room for a nap, and he went for a walk. Two hours later, he came bursting into the room, telling me to get my clothes on because we were "gonna run a mission".

I was completely spaced out, and demanded details. He had found two horses tied to a tree just off the resort and wanted me

(me!) to help him release these animals. “Hell no”, I responded with a laugh and went back to sleep. He trekked back alone to release the horses.

Nighttime rolled around quicker than ever, we hit up the buffet, watched some live entertainment, then headed back to the room.

Again. With the snoring and the snot! I just could not deal. In the middle of the night, I was awoken by him pulling one of my blankets from my bed. Apparently, his nose was running because his bed was beside the air conditioner and he was too cold.

I snatched back my blanket and told him to turn down the thermostat instead. Not long after, he requested to switch beds with me.

He had been blowing his nose in that bed for two days now, there was no way that I was going to sleep on those sheets. He continued to badger me, so I gave in. It was 4am and there we were, switching out the linens so we could swap beds. The worst.

We did our own thing for the rest of the trip, and it was amazing. We'd only meet at meal times for the buffet and then our last celebratory “fancy” dinner. On departure day I was excited to go back home, so I woke up extra early to pack. He woke up even earlier, to take in the sunrise. As I was cleaning the room, I found a random cardboard box, so I opened it to see what was inside. The box contained 7 live crabs. WHAT. THE. FUCK?

He was collecting crabs on the beach and sneaking them back into our room. I put the box on the balcony and awaited his return.

Upon further investigation, I discovered that his intention was to bring these little creatures back to Canada with us. “Absolutely not”, I said with clear conviction. He didn’t argue.

As we were leaving the resort, one of the staff said, “next time you come back, I want to see three of you”, gesturing to an imaginary pregnant belly. Oh no no no. No possibility. Never happening. Nope. Miss me with that.

Let’s Reflect...

You never really know people until you spend a significant amount of time with them. I’m so glad that I was able to make the most out of my situation given the circumstances.

FULL COURT PRESS

One of the things that I really admire about myself is that I always go for what I want. In dating, in the creative space, in business, in life - I have no problem making the first move.

This story begins with me going for what I wanted at the exact moment I decided that I wanted it. I was at the gym using the cardio machines on the second floor that were overlooking the basketball court - this is where I preferred to do my cardio, because.. Well, you can put two and two together.

I was wrapping up my workout when I saw a major hunk walk onto the court all alone, so I headed downstairs to shoot my shot (see what I did there?)

I opened the door to the basketball court with all of the confidence in the world and asked him with a straight face, “do you want to verse me?” He kinda looked at me surprised, as if to say, “are you talking to me”.

Gently laughing, he replied, “sure”.

What he didn't know is that I'm actually good at basketball.

Another thing about me: I do NOT like to lose.

So we started playing, he definitely had height on me, but I had heart lol. The score was so close the entire time, and we were playing to 21. It was game point, so I stopped and said, “let's put a wager on this.”

He responded, “sure, what do you want to bet?”

I suggested that if I won, he had to take me out for my birthday which was a week away, and if he won, I'd take him out for his birthday, whenever it was. Take note, this was a "win-win" situation that I put myself in. Knowing that I had a lot riding on this game, and I wanted some romance on my birthday, I put my ass in overdrive and ended up winning the game.

Since you can lead a horse to the water, but you should never force them to drink, I made it a fact to hand him the ball, exchange names, and head out (I'm a busy woman). I literally put myself on a platter, *he* would have to be the one to seal the deal. As I was walking out, he yelled, "hey, how am I gonna take you out when I don't even have your number?"

Boom. Signed, sealed, delivered.

He remembered my actual birthday and called me that morning. We set up a date for a few days later, he would be picking me up.

Hold on, I didn't even give y'all his stats. By far he was one of the most attractive men I've been with, if not *the* most attractive.

- 6 feet tall
- Slim athletic build
- Good head of hair
- Dimples (on both sides)

When it was time for the actual date, my confidence was wavering. I was second-guessing myself and if he was out of my league, totally throwing off my vibe. He called me when he was outside, and I was wearing these freakem boots that only came out on special occasions. I opened his passenger door and got inside, all I heard was a crunching noise. I had sat on his glasses and broke them.

We pulled up to the restaurant and as I was getting out, I could feel that my boot was stuck to something. Instead of stopping and unhooking it, I pulled extra hard and broke his car seat lmao, I couldn't make this shit up.

Inside the restaurant, things got even worse. We hadn't really communicated since our one on one game, and turns out, he was boring AF! Snooze. Boo. Tomatoes, tomatoes, tomatoes!

He was a gorgeous man to look at, perfection, but couldn't hold a conversation for shit. We ordered our food and then engaged in elevator talk. Once we finished eating, he excused himself to the washroom. This was my opportunity to grab my phone and start texting my girls. About ten minutes passed and he still wasn't back, either he had a bad case of diarrhea or he had left me.

I started to panic a little.

I looked over my shoulder and to my relief, there he was sitting at the bar watching the game. I instantly burst into laughter. He left our booth so he could go and watch the game! How friggin' rude is that??

He ended up coming back to our table a few minutes later to settle the bill. He drove me home and I wish I could say that things ended there.

We actually dated for a few months, things ended up fizzling out on their own. And because he was so fine, we dated AGAIN a couple years later. To this day, we're still connected on socials, and he graces my timeline every now and then.. Still a hunk.

Let's Reflect...

If it wasn't for his looks, our first date would've been our last, I can say this with certainty. I put this man on a pedestal and was doubtful of what I brought to the table. This way of thinking set the tone for a toxic dynamic in our relationship and made things so uncomfortable for me. I'm still working on the whole confidence thing and hope to have that figured out asap. If you don't already know, you are enough! Remember that.

THE DISRESPECT

This was the most dysfunctional relationship of my life.

Things were on and off (but mostly on) for about 2.5 years. There was no doubt that he really liked me, even loved me, but he was just... whack lol.

We finally got to a really good place, my friends *actually* started approving of our relationship. They would even allow him to hang out with us from time to time, no longer icing him out.

I had one friend in particular (let's call her Gertrude), that just wouldn't let up on him. Every chance she got, she would tell me that I deserved better and that he simply wasn't good enough. I laughed it off, but continued seeing him anyway.

My other friends thought that she was simply being too harsh with her deep disdain for this man.

One day we were meeting up for dinner, me, my man and a few friends. Gertrude called me saying that she happened to be in the area. I invited her to join us, it was going to be a group thing. A few minutes later, she arrived and everything was cool... for the first 20 minutes. I couldn't even tell you what the argument was over, but things got heated between her and my man, like an episode of Love and Hip Hop. Not only was it embarrassing, it was scary. I'll never forget the sweat beads on his forehead or the veins in her neck. The group of friends worked quickly to separate them and diffuse the situation.

Later that night I was on the phone with my two best friends trying to make sense out of the evening. My one girl felt that things were fishy, she was confused with the passionate anger.

Carefully, she suggested that there might be something going on between the two of them. We all burst out laughing because, well.. Gertrude was just as unattractive as the name I gave her.

In the middle of our cackle, I got a call on my other line, it was him. I put my girls on hold to pick up, Without any warning he spilled word vomit all over me. He told me that he had been sleeping with Gertrude behind my back for several months AND they were together before dinner that very day - just used separate entrances.

Every little detail, he told me without being prompted.

I got off the phone with him and informed my two friends who were still on the other line. This one event was the impetus for the divide of our larger friendship group. I had friends who "didn't want to get involved", those weren't my friends.

The next day, Gertrude called me, I didn't answer - we never spoke again.

As far as my relationship was concerned, things were OVER. It didn't even need to be said. For months after that, he tried his hardest to fix things. No victory.

Let's Reflect...

Looking back at this situation, I'm surprised that I even expected better from this man. I allowed him to treat me like shit and do whatever he wanted. I turned a blind eye and pretended like everything was okay. I never made that mistake, ever again.

My definition of "close friends" changed as well. This may be controversial, but if someone does me big-time dirty, I expect

that my close friends will follow my lead. Pick a side! I know it's petty, but that's just the way it is.

WHITE NOISE

I don't even remember this man's name, but our one and only date will forever live rent free in my mind.

It was a snowy winter evening, cold but not freezing. He was from way up north so we decided to meet halfway. It took me about 40 minutes to drive out, but I made it happen.

When I pulled up to the restaurant, he had already gone inside, grabbed us a table and ordered himself a drink. I walked in and spotted him right away. I approached the table, he remained seated to greet me, I took off my jacket and joined him.

He had a really laid back energy, which I liked.

We engaged in small talk after ordering a variety of apps. The conversation was rolling, but didn't spark anything. I knew within the first few minutes that this would be our only date and I would be unmatching him as soon as the bill was paid.

This man was originally from Sudbury and his most prized pastimes were hunting and fishing.

Ya girl is from Scarborough.

I don't know how the topic of race came up, but it did, and I knew I was in for a ride.

He asked me about my ethnicity, and then proceeded to guess. I humoured him. After a few wrong guesses, he gave in. I shared that I was part Jamaican, he was beyond surprised, replying, "no way, you can't be half Jamaican, all Jamaicans have cornrows."

Yes, he said “cornrows”

We then entered into a conversation of him questioning why my hair was straight. When I told him that my natural hair is curly and that I use a straightener, he was mind blown. Suddenly, I was berated with an assortment of questions, investigating how long it takes for me to straighten my hair, and how I get it back curly.

He then went on to share with me that a friend of his has a “mixed race” child, and that all mixed children look like Mowgli from the Junglebook with “wild hair and tanned skin”

I couldn’t do anything but laugh in my mind, anticipating how fire the group chat was going to be later on.

He transitioned seamlessly into recounting his latest hunting expedition where he killed and dismembered a bison, then struggled to fit it into his freezer.

I. COULD NOT. RELATE.

Since he had so much bison meat, he cooked it into a potluck dish for the office and didn’t label it. His coworkers were outraged once they discovered that they had unknowingly consumed bison. He found this comical.

Quite some time had passed with him serenading me in all of his opinions and it was time to pay the bill. He looked at me, I looked at him. I paid the bill. I knew I was NEVER going to speak to this man again and I could not in good conscience have him pay the bill (I’ve since let go of this way of being).

As soon as I got to the car, I unmatched him as planned, and chuckled to myself the entire ride home. “Mowgli from The Jungle Book”

Let's Reflect...

After telling this story to a few friends, I had mixed reviews, some laughed, others were upset that I hadn't checked him for his ignorance. Honestly, I did feel a little regret for not putting him in line. I'm an extremely non-confrontational person, and even now, I will do anything to dodge an argument or disagreement. Generally, I'm very careful with my time and energy, so if I don't see a space or willingness for growth in a person, I won't even bother..

MAKING EXCEPTIONS?

We met at Revival Bar in Toronto at a party called “Nostalgia”. The night was winding down, but the venue was still packed, people standing shoulder to shoulder enjoying the music. I noticed in my peripherals a man standing next to me, clearly wanting to make eye contact, so I gave it to him.

Now, he was not my “type” by any means, but I was down to make a new friend. I can admit that he wasn’t a *bad* looking guy, though. We exchanged a few sentences over the loud music, then he asked me for my number.

THIS was the time in my life that I was so liberal with giving out my phone number.

That night he texted me “to make sure I got home safe” - no matter how cheesy some people think this is, I really like when men do a follow up/check in. I knew he was going to try his luck to pry himself outta the friendzone, I just had this feeling. He put his best foot forward and was super consistent for a few months, so I reluctantly decided to graduate him out of the friendzone.

Although I wasn’t physically attracted to him at all, I had had such terrible experiences with men that entire year. The way he treated me was refreshing, it was comforting, I never felt like I had to play games or like the ball wasn’t in my court.

We dated for a few months with no label, he was very clear that he wanted to be in a relationship.

For the longest time I was hesitant to enter into an official relationship because of the responsibility. When I would

casually date, I didn't feel pressure to deliver pristine communication. When things fizzled out, or I decided that it wasn't working for me anymore, I just would slowly distance myself. I felt like being in a relationship would mean that I was "stuck" and getting out could only happen after having an uncomfortable conversation. Like I said earlier, I hate confrontation, I will do just about anything to avoid it.

I continued to give him excuses (like a fuckboy.. or fuckgirl) and string him along because I enjoyed his company. I liked going on dates and mini trips, and having someone to check in with, but I still wanted to keep my options open. What a loser I was lol.

Excuses. Excuses. Excuses. I was full of shit. I was selfish.

One day, he presented me with that ultimatum, he had caught onto my bullshit. Things were different, he wanted exclusivity.

We had grown so close, was he ready and willing to let everything go? So I called his bluff - there was no way he could just drop everything, drop me...

Baby, I called that bluff and never heard from him again.

Clean breaks always hurt the most. That cold turkey shit, you can miss me with that. I like progressive, I like slowness, and I can be adverse to direct change.

Of course I creeped him on social media years later, he's married and has one kid (that I know of). I wasn't hurt by this when I saw pictures, I smiled so big, I was truly so happy for him. I have nothing bad to say. I'm positive that he's happy, fulfilled, and thriving.

Let's Reflect...

People aren't to be toyed with or strung along, it's just not nice. In hindsight, I could have been more clear with the fact that I didn't want a relationship at the time instead of making up random excuses as to why I couldn't commit. I wish I had handled it differently.

This man was a stand up guy, he deserved better. I take full responsibility. He was way too good of a person for the person I was. Sometimes, thinking outside of yourself can be so helpful, I try to make this a habit.

THREE HOURS EARLY > A MINUTE TOO LATE

What scared me about this one was that I could find nothing wrong with him, I could actually see a future. Have you ever met someone, but the timing was just off? Like, if I had met this man where I'm at today, it'd be game over.

We met at work, I had a crush on him for a while, but I really didn't think that he'd be into me. It was my last day, he approached me, was so straightforward in asking for my number, saying that he wanted to connect outside of work.

I knew him to be a stuffy person who put professionalism on a pedestal, but outside of the workplace he was AMAZING. Silly, great sense of humour, adventurous, and kind. We spent the entire summer together, every day we would do random things like play cards in the park, go rollerblading, even fly kites lol. I had never flown a kite before this man.

Yeezy taught me

I actually wanted to be in a relationship with him, and he wanted it too, but I knew I wasn't ready. We had built a trusting and communicative relationship so I straight out told him that I wanted to try "us" in another couple years. I could offer him nothing at the time.

He assured me that we could take things slowly, and that we should give it a shot despite the feelings I had.

I didn't budge.

Things didn't end right away, but he definitely adjusted his expectations and created space between the two of us. I allowed it to happen.

One day, I got home and there was a gift outside of my house with his handwriting, instructing me not to open it until my birthday (which was weeks away). I immediately called him, he didn't answer. I wasn't going to push.

I really wanted to talk to him, but I was confident that he would reach out on his own time.

I followed his instructions and didn't open the gift until my birthday, he had bought me a thoughtful box of gifts. All of my favourite games and small knick knacks that reminded me of our inside jokes. He FaceTimed me later on that evening to wish me a happy birthday.

Noticing that his background was different, I questioned where he was. Since we hadn't really been speaking for the weeks prior, there was a lot that I didn't know. Earlier that year, he had turned down a job offer in the UK, and I guess he reached back out after our fallout and accepted.

This guy moved to the UK!

The distance opened up our communication again.. Or maybe he just didn't know anyone there, so he was willing to talk to me regularly. After a few months, things waned out on their own.

I knew that I would be dating pigs for the next couple years and I wasn't even concerned with it because as soon as he returned home, it'd be me and him. He messaged me a couple weeks

before he was to return, saying that he had something to tell me.

I was so excited.

He came to my house the day he landed and we sat outside. The embrace wasn't quite like it had been in the past. He looked me in the eyes and told me that he was engaged. I could feel my heart drop.

I had spent the past 2 years looking forward to this very moment, envisioning it so differently. He was apologetic, but very matter of fact.

I'm no homewrecker, so I left it there. No more calls, no more messages, nothing.

I blamed myself for a while thereafter. For following my head over my heart and not acting in the moment. For assuming that time was on my side, that I could have my cake and eat it too.

I ran into him in 2020, he was happily married with kids. It was awkward, because he took out his phone to show me pictures that I wasn't interested in seeing (lol). I had to pretend like I was impressed, and like his kids were cute. Thank goodness for those acting classes.

Ok, I'm being petty now, but you feel me, right?

Let's Reflect...

Time waits for no one. I have such an interesting relationship with the concept of time. I feel like there's never enough of it for me to do everything that I want to do. I'm reluctant to fill my time

or make commitments because of my extensive life bucket list. Once I have something in mind, I create an order in which it is to be performed, and very rarely do I make amendments.

I wanna live more in the moment, and let go, be spontaneous and let life happen. Things don't always have to be planned out and calculated.

KNOW YOURSELF, KNOW YOUR WORTH *throwback*

I grew up in the hood, not hood-adjacent, or lower middle class, I'm talking INSIDE of the hood. My mom did everything in her power to make sure that my siblings and I weren't stereotypical products of our environment. Although I played outside with the neighbourhood kids every day, as a 9 year old, I was the only one who wore a watch. My mom would tell me exactly what time to be home, and I'd have to make sure that I was at my door not one minute later. Every summer, I had the meanest tanline on my wrist.

My teenage years, I was definitely an ugly duckling. Full blown unibrow and moustache, I was short and chubby with acne too. It wasn't until I turned 16/17 that I had a growth spurt, shooting up five foot six and slimming out because of it. I was later introduced to a threading lady who took care of my unibrow and moustache, and just like that, I was "desirable".

Luckily, by this time, I had already watched other girls my age make mistakes, so I took note. I could also hear the way that teenage boys spoke about these same girls - couldn't be me, wouldn't be me.

I started getting attention that I had never received. Before, I could walk past a group of guys and no one would pay me any mind, now, it was different. I didn't like it actually, it made me so uncomfortable. I would sometimes walk the long way home just to avoid it.

I met my first boyfriend through a mutual friend. One day, he came to my area to get a haircut (we all know, the best haircuts happen in the hood). When we walked in, I locked eyes with this boy who was finishing up in the barber chair.

Back then, Chris Brown had just hit the scene and the guy looked *just* like him. Spitting image.

He looked at my boyfriend, my boyfriend looked at him - there was something there. Turns out, they knew each other, and there was bad blood - I would find this out later.

I couldn't stop thinking about this Chris Brown look-alike. The next day, I walked my little brother over to his best friend's house, which took about 20 minutes. His best friend had an older sister, she was 3 years older than me, and mad cool. I went inside to hang out with her for a bit before heading back home.

We were setting up videogames in the guest bedroom, and guess who I saw walk out of the bathroom with just a towel around his waist? The CHRIS BROWN guy!

Turns out, he was their mom's boyfriend's son (hope that made sense). He would be staying with them for the summer.

We locked eyes just like the first time, we were both caught so off guard. Right away, we switched phone numbers. I was very clear with him that we could only be friends, he was fine with that. He didn't know anyone in my part of the city, so we hung out pretty often. We would play basketball, go on bike rides, hang out at his place, go for walks, everything teens do. Naturally, we both started feeling each other, but nothing happened (until years later, but that'll be in volume 2).

After a few weeks of getting close, he shared that his dad didn't like him hanging out with me or walking to my neck of the woods. This, I understand now as an adult, but I was so

offended. His dad (who was one of those hoity toity black men) thought that I would be a bad influence on his precious son. He didn't even know me. If anything, his son was the one who would have a negative influence on *me*.

Everytime I went over to his house, I just felt weird, especially if his dad was home. I wanted to prove that I was good, that I was worthy.

Once the summer was over, we drifted apart naturally. He went back to his home in the suburbs, we were young and neither of us drove, so it just wasn't easy to stay connected. I went on to finish high school, go to university, and work my ass off. I ended up buying my first house at 25.

He had a lot of pressure from home, and in his case, pressure burst pipes.

When we came back together as adults, he was impressed that I made it out of poverty. I was offended.

I've always had a chip on my shoulder, like I have to wear it on my forehead, that I'm independent, that I don't *need* anyone, like there's something to prove. Good is never good enough. And while that way of thinking has gotten me so far, it's also impeded my ability to live in the moment and just exist.

Let's Reflect...

My life, thus far, has been a perfectly thought out trajectory to "success" - whatever that means. I don't feel successful, I feel incomplete. I've gone so far, but was it in the right direction? For the most part, I've done what I was told I *should* do. I'm not going to complain about where it landed me, but I can't help but

imagine what would have happened if I listened to myself, and did things the way I wanted to.

I've been obsessed with proving people wrong. One upping everything. I seriously can't tell you the last time I felt proud of any of my accomplishments until I finally started wrapping up on *this* book. Tonight I'll call "a wrap" and celebrate with feelings of pride, and sleep lol. The book will be complete. I will have finally created something and accomplished a personal goal to make *myself* proud.

Through writing and reflecting, I've uncovered so much about myself; my areas of weakness, blindspots, triggers, and explanations to my way of being. I'm beginning to understand my shortcomings at their roots, and guide my choices moving forward with confidence.

This year, I want to tell stories, share stories, start conversations, make people think, make people laugh, make people cry. Connect! That's what I want.

Thank you to everyone who is reading and listening, and made it to the end. Thank you for seeing my vision and believing in my craft.

Love,

Cas