

***I Was Bitter,
Now I'm Better***

JERRA LATRICE

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This book is intended only as an informative guide to inspire those wishing to attract love through extensive self-reflection and forgiveness of others. Readers are advised to consult a professional relationship coach or counselor before making changes in their love life. The reader assumes all responsibility for the consequences of any actions taken based on the information presented in this book. The information in this book is based on the author's own personal experiences. Every attempt has been made to ensure that the information is accurate; however, the author cannot accept liability for any errors that may exist. All inside photos are courtesy of Jerra Latrice and have been cleared by those included in the pictures, or those associated with those included in the pictures.

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This book is intended for women who have experienced or are experiencing hurt due to relationships. I understand your pain. I was once like you. Through my experiences, I will share how I was able to use my bitterness as fuel to become a better woman.

To protect the identity of those mentioned in my book, I have used fictitious names. For my family and friends — please understand that things you read in my book were written for my healing purposes — not to hurt you.

*Peace and blessings,
— Jerra Latrice*



“Why aren’t you married yet??
You seem like a great catch.
I just don’t get it.”

Introduction

I always had this fantasy of walking down the aisle, marrying the man of my dreams while *Ribbon in the Sky*, by Mr. Stevie Wonder played in the background. To this day, it is still one of my absolute favorite love songs. Something about the melody in the beginning of the song...the perfect combination of harmony and rhythm of the instruments is so tranquilizing. Then, the beautiful lyrics combined with Mr. Wonder's voice are simply breathtaking. "*Oh, so loooong for this night I've prayed, that a starrrrr would guide you my way...*" Just brilliant!! What a wonderful feeling it is to be loved. I could not wait for a man to express his love for me in this manner.

My fantasy to become married with two kids and a five-bedroom house, equipped with a pool and a massive kitchen remained with me until I reached adulthood. My goal was to be married by age thirty. No ifs, ands, or buts about it. In my mind, my husband just HAD to be tall, muscular, handsome, with nice teeth, and a lucrative career. I was always obsessed with a man with who has a beautiful smile—call it vain if you want, it's just my preference. Another obsession I had with dating men in my younger days was, insisting on dating only the light-skinned ones. Actually, it was one of my requirements. I simply could not be associated with a man that was darker than me.

Oftentimes, we are initially attracted to certain men because of their looks, financial status, and/or the make and model of their vehicle. I understand how these attributes can be enticing. However, instead of being so materialistic and mesmerized by physical features, we should seek to discover the heart of a man. By simply taking the time to truly get to know someone, observing, and asking specific questions, we could save ourselves from potential heartbreaks. Just because a man has a handsome face and a nice body does not necessarily mean he is flawless. If someone would have given me this advice a long time ago, I probably would not have made some of the mistakes you will soon read about.

Over the years, the course of life and dating caused me to become so bitter, that I eventually began to hate men. Although I never partook in same-sex dating (not judging/bashing those that do...it's your preference), I became very withdrawn to the point that the mere *thought* of getting to know someone on a romantic level utterly disgusted me. I simply was not interested. My trust in men was at an all-time low because of the dishonest ones that played a part in causing heartbreaks. In my mind, all men were dogs, liars, and careless, immature human beings. I had to ask myself these questions: "Are *ALL* men *really* 'dogs'?? Or am *I* the one to blame for choosing the same type of man over and over again?? "Were there character flaws within myself that I needed to work on?"

In fact, my character flaws will be discussed extensively in the following chapters. There were several deep-rooted internal issues that plagued my abilities to sustain successful relationships. These character flaws involved abandonment issues, low- self-esteem, and having 'bag lady' syndrome (a phrase made popular by singer, Erykah Badu, that describes how a woman carries baggage from relationship to relationship,

making all men pay for the mistakes of the prior man). In the upcoming chapters, I describe why I made the choice to become abstinent, the importance of forgiveness, and why it is necessary to practice self-reflection and take accountability for failed relationships.

If someone were to tell me that I would eventually welcome love into my life again, and stop making men pay for the mistakes of my past, I would not believe them. Although I have been emotionally scarred and spent many nights crying over failed relationships, I now view my heartbreaks as learning experiences. Now that I am older and wiser, I realize the importance of forgiveness, accountability, and embracing new beginnings. My past heartbreaks have made me triumphant because I know my future is so much brighter than my past. My heart is no longer cold, and I am open to receive and reciprocate love from a man that God has made specifically for me. Evolving from a broken, bitter woman to a joyous and loving person has not been an easy process—AT ALL. But, my journey was necessary and purposeful.

It is my sincere hope that my story motivates you, the reader, to find the strength to become a better version of yourself. Use your bitterness from your past relationship(s) as fuel to cultivate a better person within. You have the ability to attract the man of your dreams.

*You have the ability
to attract the man of
your dreams.*





My Sour Beginnings

“I vividly remember writing a letter to God
asking Him to make me pretty one day.”

—JERRA LATRICE

First things first, I would like to mention that even though this chapter is titled “My Sour Beginnings”, its purpose is not to speak negatively about those who shaped and molded me into the lady I am today. In fact, my grandmother played a significant role in raising me, along with my mother, aunts, and a few close older cousins. They are all highly respected in my eyes, and I will always cherish my years spent with these remarkable individuals. Now back to the subject matter at hand...

Growing up, I was never considered the pretty girl in class. Well...let me take that back. In my younger years, between ages four to seven, people mistook me for Rudy Huxtable (Keisha Knight-Pulliam) from *The Cosby Show*. I had the long, thick hair, caramel-colored skin, and the same innocent features as the young Keisha Knight-Pulliam. My mom still tells the story of people approaching her at *The Village* and asking her, “Is that Rudy Huxtable?” (For those that are not familiar with *The Village*—it

was once a booming shopping center located in the heart of my hometown, Gary, Indiana.) Most would proclaim, “She looks just like Rudy Huxtable!” in passing. These comments made my mom feel good. She always talked about how she enjoyed taking me out in public, because sometimes she would receive free food and other trinkets because of my appearance.

In elementary school, there were three boys that used to literally chase me home from school every single day. Every. Single. Day. LOL! I truly wish I could make this story up. I believe I was in either 2nd or 3rd grade at Carver Elementary School. One boy would play with my pigtails, while the second teased me about my dirty backpack. The other one would just chase me because his other two friends were doing it. Every day, they would chase me the three blocks from Carver Elementary to my grandmother’s home on Virginia Street. “Your backpack is dirty just like a DOG!” One of the boys chanted to me on a daily occasion. He would chase me at full speed chanting, “Jerra’s bookbag is ugly. It’s dirty like a DOG!” It took a few weeks before I finally told my mom the reason I kept asking for a new backpack. Until this day, I don’t think she even gave a damn as to why I would come home from school breathing so heavily.

When I told my mother the reasons behind why I wanted a new backpack and who was chasing me home from school, she laughed and said, “Honey, those boys just like you, that’s all.” Then, proceeded to hand wash my backpack, and hang it on the clothesline to dry. Looking back, that was some old-school, country ish to me. I’ve never seen nor heard of anyone scrubbing a doggone backpack, and then letting it dry on the clothesline! Needless to say, I never received a new backpack that year, nor did I understand why the boys were so mean to me if they had a crush on me. The chasing

continued until it was finally too cold outside for those three stooges to torment me.

In middle school, I started puberty. To say this was my awkward phase is a severe understatement. During this phase of my life, I had awful cystic acne, I was chubby, I wore thick prescription glasses, and my thick and frizzy hair was very unmanageable; my self-confidence was also at an all-time low. People no longer mistook me for Rudy Huxtable, and the boys from elementary school had stopped chasing me home. Hell, they were running FROM me instead of toward me! Ok, ok, I was just being sarcastic...but you get the point.

I hated going to school because I knew people would tease me because of how I looked. "Pizza face, Bumpy Face Johnson, fat, ugly, big-teethed, knock-kneed girl", were all names I was accustomed to in middle school. The ones that would tease me every day made my life a living hell. Some kids can be so cruel. Although I had a small, close circle of friends, I mainly kept to myself due to low self-confidence and feeling inadequate. During one of my lunch hours spent alone, I remember staring at a classmate of mine from a distance, she was so beautiful to me. Her skin was clear, she had perfect teeth, a nice shape (even in middle school!), and all the boys were infatuated with her. Tiffany Swagerty even had the personality to match her great looks; she was always laughing, smiling, and extremely popular.

After watching her mingle and socialize with her friends during lunch hour, I wished that I could trade places with her. "I bet she never has to worry about feeling

*"I bet she never has to
worry about feeling
ugly everyday"*

ugly everyday”, is what I thought to myself. After school that day, I went home and cried. I vividly remember writing a letter to God asking Him to one day make me pretty because I wanted the boys to like me. To be honest, I wanted to like myself and I wanted my stepfather to accept me.

Shortly after my mother earned her degree as a Registered Nurse and began working full-time, my stepfather was responsible for watching after my younger sister and brother as well as myself when we came home from school. At this phase in my life, we no longer lived with my grandmother, we now lived on the other side of town. My stepfather was my siblings’ biological father. Sadly, he treated me just like a stepchild. The verbal abuse I often endured was something I wish I could permanently forget. I remember him calling me ugly, stupid, and fat. Can you imagine being humiliated by classmates at school and at home by your guardian? On a daily basis, I put up with his snarl, verbal abuse, and name-calling in front of my siblings. It was not a pleasant experience and it seemed like a never-ending cycle.

I can remember asking my six-year-old brother to clean up after himself one day only for my stepfather to abruptly interject. “She ain’t nobody. You don’t have to listen to her ass!”

My sister and I felt my stepfather loved my brother more than he loved us because he intentionally showed favoritism towards him. When my mother would come home from her night shift at the hospital, my sister and I complained about the unfair treatment. She would confront my stepfather about the incidents, but it was always back to the same routine the next day.

The blatant favoritism shown toward my brother strained my relationships with him and my stepfather; because my stepfather treated my brother like royalty, and I was considered

the peasant, I did not like him. I endured verbal abuse from my stepfather for several years until my mother and stepfather finally went their separate ways. After he moved out of the house, I could not have been happier. In fact, I believe it was one of the happiest moments of my teenaged life.

After my mother and stepfather's relationship ended, I had begun high school and my acne, awkward looks, and low self-confidence were still prevalent. Of course, I was still being teased at school. As crazy as it may sound, I actually had gotten used to the torment. I used to sit next to an obnoxious, ram-bunctious, annoying class clown who always had the urge to talk about how awful I looked. It appeared that he had nothing better to do than to bully and embarrass me. Most times, I'd just ignore him and roll my eyes and ignore him and proceed to do my work in Mrs. Fullilove's English class.

Finally, one day, the loud and obnoxious guy kept calling me 'pizza face' until Tawana Johnson (now Tawana Harris) interjected, and said, "That's not nice, how would you feel if someone disrespected you like that?" Tawana was very outspoken (in a positive way) and well-respected by our peers. She even won the "Best Personality" award during our senior year! Ever since that day in Mrs. Fullilove's freshman English class, I've had nothing but respect for her. The obnoxious guy did not torment me (as much) after Tawana called him out.

Over the years, it seemed like my acne had gotten worse and worse. I hated looking in the mirror at myself. In fact, the only attribute I loved looking at in the mirror was my hair. I had finally learned how to manage it, and others began to admire the long, thick, wavy texture. My face was another story. I begged, cried, and pleaded with my mother endlessly to give me permission to visit a dermatologist until she finally sent me to the best dermatologist in Northwest Indiana. Near the

end of my high school sophomore year, I started visiting my doctor regularly until my acne cleared up through the usage of prescription medication.

It is important to note that this particular brand of acne medication that I was prescribed was not a pleasant experience. Although it did wonders for clearing my skin, the side effects (explained by my doctor well in advance) caused depression, suicidal thoughts, mood swings, and stomach/cramping issues. Unfortunately, my mindset back then was, "If the medicine can make me look pretty, I DON'T CARE about the side effects!" Heartbreaking. It was also explained to me that my acne would get much worse before it got better while on the medication. And, boy was my doctor right about that!

My face did THEE MOST when I began taking that medication. I never felt uglier in my entire life. The first few months on the medication were pure hell. I remember having severe cystic acne on my cheeks, chin, and forehead. The stress from constantly focusing on my looks only made my acne worse, go figure. I seriously wanted to quit taking the medication yet I kept hearing my doctor's voice in my head, "*Your acne will get worse before it gets better.*" I hated my reflection, and how others would sometimes stare at me in disgust. Honestly, I just hated myself all together. There were times when I wished I would just die.

The medication finally started to improve my acne during the latter half of my junior year in high school. My face wasn't as bumpy, but it wasn't 100% clear either. Nonetheless, I was still noticing a significant difference compared to the previous year. During the beginning of my senior year, however, I thought I looked damn good! I was FINE AS HELL (in my most humble opinion lol)!! My face was smooth and clear, and life was great. In the summer of my junior year in high

school, I started working as a waitress at a local buffet in my community. The tips I would earn as a waitress allowed me to go shopping for the latest trendy clothes, keep my hair done every two weeks, and order take-out for me and my siblings while my mother was at work.

Because my skin started clearing up, a lot of boys in high school started to show interest. During the times when I had bad acne, I overheard a young boy say to his friends, "She would be pretty if she didn't have all those damned bumps on her face." I can laugh today and honestly say that he was one of the boys who flirted with me after my acne cleared up. I did not date very much in high school, but there were a few impressionable young men who caught my attention. For the most part though, I continued to keep to myself and focus on my studies, which eventually resulted in me graduating with Honors.

A couple of years after I graduated high school, my stepfather died from colon cancer. Although it may sound heartless to admit this, I was barely affected by his death. This was partially due to how he treated me while I was younger. I was still young, in some regard, when he passed. Also, my mind and my heart were not programmed to forgive others. If I could rewind time, I would have shown more compassion towards him during his illness, and shown some emotion at his funeral. Also, I would express my forgiveness toward him for the verbal abuse I endured from him, and the favoritism he showed toward my brother when we were younger.

Even though my upbringing had its sour moments, I now realize that it is harmful to carry resentment and bitterness for several years because of other's actions.