

Kwame entered the room, and from the look of things, he knew that this wasn't going to be an easy task. He tried to lighten the mood by offering everyone something to drink, but it was no use. The mood had already been set. There was no getting around it. Kwame knew the gist of Jacqueline's story, but more important than intricate details, he wanted to give Jacqueline a safe place to share her feelings without fear of judgment, and hopefully provide an avenue for forgiveness and understanding. Kwame had been counseling patients and their families for years, but there was something about Jacqueline that intrigued him. He knew she was a successful Jazz singer with beautiful natural coils that accentuated her high cheek bones and sun kissed complexion. From the outside, she was a magnificent creature, but more than her outward appearance, Kwame wanted to know more about this woman. Yes, she had a no holds barred type of exterior, and she commanded all those

in her presence to stand at attention, but inside it seemed as if she was this broken little girl that Kwame so desperately wanted to reach, and ultimately rescue. As the room was filled with noisy silence, no one knew what to say or where to begin.

“Mr. and Mrs. Devereaux, I want to thank you so much for coming to help Jacqueline in the healing process. And Spice, from what I’ve heard and our brief conversations, you are a dear friend to Jacqueline, so I’m hoping you can be a support system in this meeting.”

Spice quickly responded, “Of course Mr. Anderson, I’ll do whatever it takes to help Jacqueline.”

“Please, call me Kwame. No need for formalities here. I want this to be a safe environment for everyone. I’m sure we all have Jacqueline’s best interest at heart.”

Jacqueline rolled her eyes and looked off into the distance. She was uncertain if Kwame's statement was true as she thought about Paula.

Nathen interjected, "Absolutely Kwame, we are here to help Jacqueline get whatever answers she needs. I know that I've hurt Jacqueline, and I want to do my part to make things better."

Kwame responded, "You've been quiet Paula. Is there anything you would like to say before we begin?"

Paula grimaced for a moment, "Well I love my baby and all I want is the best for her. I must admit that I've felt the cold shoulder from Jacqueline since I got here, and it makes me worried that she will not be receptive to anything I have to say."

Jacqueline chimed in, “You see Kwame. This is what I’ve been telling you about. I can’t deal with Paula right now. I wasn’t the one who lied, and she wants to make me out to be the bad guy!”

Excerpt from Chapter Seven - *Breaking Free From Me*

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