

THE SCALES OF LOVE
THE BATTLE AND DIFFERENCES OF LOVE

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Introduction

You can close your eyes to the things you do not want to see, but you cannot close your heart to the things you do not want to feel. ~Anonymous

So here I am 35 years later with the only vivid memory of my father is watching him walk out the door without any type of explanation or goodbye. Traumatized by my father's abandonment and left with emotions of neglect, fear, unworthiness, pain, and no *daddy* to love me or ever any hope of being '*daddy's little girl*' has left me empty with a replay of unhealthy relationships going nowhere but down 'used and taken for granted' street. I was clueless on what having a sustainable relationship meant let alone how to maintain one...oh and at the thought of love entering the picture, I either ran from it, sabotaged it or allowed fear to overtake me that I ended up doing something to push the poor guy away.

Never did I realize my future will be so jacked up over my father's absence or him leaving my mother and me. Guess no matter how successful you become the demons will show up just to remind you what you have lingering in your closet of unresolved issues. And I must admit my skeletons have definitely been torturing me lately.

I'm a well established business woman with the presumption to have it all together as a single mother. I must say, I do dress it up however, what you get on the outside is not exactly how it appears on the inside. I have two beautiful children who are my world; Dj and Symone. Dj is my little gentleman and protector...the 'man' of the house. And my Symone, she's the sweetest! A true imitation of me, so you probably guessed my concerns with her - unanswered questions, her fears, her struggles, her desire for her Daddy, and unanswered questions to be resolved just as I once longed for.

I struggle with revealing the truth to my little angel. Ashamed and embarrassed of the nature of my relationship with her father and how the truth will affect Symone, slowly kills me inside. Never considering the consequences of my actions in the midst of it all until the moment I saw Symone precious face.

I have got to get back to Brayla and in the process re-evaluate, "Are my Wants in Alignment with my Worth?"

Prologue

Have you ever felt the pain of rejection, even though you didn't want what you were losing? ~Lisa Nichols

It's Friday on a warm summer evening. Brayla is playing in her room when all of sudden, she hears her parents, Joseph and Babette, arguing. As their voices become louder, Brayla moves into the hallway and sees her mother standing in her bedroom, crying and yelling at her father as he turns away and proceeds to the stairs with his bags in tote. As Babette runs behind Joseph in desperation with tears streaming down her face, she screams in a desperate spite of pain for Joseph not to leave. Joseph opens the front door just as Brayla reaches the top of the stairs. *Was he going to leave without an explanation or even a goodbye?* He looked up long enough to make eye contact with Brayla, and quickly walked out the door.



Sista Love

Some of the most sacred female relationships are the ones you share with your beloved sister, whether blood related or not. There's no bond like a Sista's - cherish it!

It was a Saturday afternoon. Brayla and her home girls Nia, Sasha and Amerus were enjoying an afternoon girl-time brunch. Nia, a remarried divorcee' who is raising her twin niece and nephew in addition to her son is a saved entrepreneur. A former NFL wifey, she is currently married to her high-school bestie, James. Sasha's the sharp, fierce one who is also married with three kids. Sasha is a handle-her-business, no-time-for-yo-mess type of chick! Her boo, Lonzo, is a successful businessman in sports and entertainment. Amerus is the young diva of the mix. Serving as somewhat of a mentee, she's fresh outta college and handles her business, yet she can't seem to balance her career and love life. Then there's me, Brayla, I'm single with two kids and fresh out of a relationship. The thing is my *heart* is still taken by my ex, Bishop. Even though I'm a successful businesswoman, with three prominent businesses, I still struggle with trying to get this man out of my heart. It's easier said than done for most women, I know. But nonetheless, I'm productive. I take care of my home, have the best home girls a friend could ask for, I love the Lord and I give to my community often. I've mastered applying all the right things to my life – but this one relationship has taken me off course.

Bishop is in upper management at a prominent company. He's in a relationship or, should I say, married with four kids and has been with the same woman since college. His tall, athletic physique makes him more than charming. He's gentle, well-kept, and has the pearls (smile) any woman would want to keep close to her heart. Oh, and his skin is the smoothest, softest, luscious carmelicious texture ever embraced.

I love my girls, but they have no idea that Bishop had a separate life all those years that we were together...except Nia. I can depend on Nia not to judge, plus she's been through hell and back. Remember, she's a former wifey of an NFL player, so I can only imagine what her ex did to her. Plus,

her faith is unshakeable and I know she can guide me through her wisdom from God and life experiences.

You can't share everything with all of your friends. You gotta have discernment and know what and who to share certain information with. Nothing personal. Just wisdom. Plus, you don't want everybody in your mix. They get too hype and can give you the wrong advice. Gotta know the different personalities of your home girls and inner circle. That way, you know what information to share and not to share. Hopefully, they're mature enough to handle and respect your privacy.

"So Brayla, what's really up with you and Bishop?" Sasha asked. "Girl, I know it's been a while since ya'll last talked. But, neither one of you ever said it was officially over."

"Sasha!" Brayla exclaimed. "That's a subject I really don't care to talk about. Besides, knowing Bishop, he probably thinks he can just waltz his behind right back into my life as if no time has gone by and everything is all good. As if there is no work to be put in. I do know that I'm not about to chase him down. He's very much aware of where I reside and how to reach me, if he so desires. I'm not a man chaser. I'm the cake and he's just the frosting in the middle."

"Dang, what about the top of the cake?" Amerus chuckled.

"Girl, please! It takes a whole lot more than what he was willing to give to make it to the top! I don't have to ride any man to get his attention. I refuse!" Brayla bellowed.

"Amen, to that!" Amerus shouted. "And why should we?! I'm just saying."

Nia chimed in, "Girl, I'm with you on that. But, let's keep it real...I mean seriously have any of you ever asked yourself the question, "Are your wants in alignment with your worth?" before jumping the gun and getting all emotionally attached? We as women have to remember to be true to ourselves and not to get so wrapped up in any man where we lose ourselves. Don't get so caught up in living his life that you forget you have one of your own."

"Nia, you always share so much wisdom. We also need to make sure we uplift each other and pray for our men, even at times when it's challenging and we don't want to," Brayla explained.

"Oh, shoot," Sasha said. "Listen to Ms. Brayla over there preachin'!"

"Girl, please! Don't act brand new. Seriously," Brayla continued. "If I knew me and Bishop would end like this, I woulda paid more attention instead of listening to my heart."

“See, that’s our problem, right there,” Amerus said. “We invest too much and end up with nothing in the end. We allow our heart to be so consumed with love that we fail to pay attention to all the signs. I’m young, but that’s a lesson I learned early.”

Sasha agreed. “But even though we do all that, sometimes we can’t help who our *heart* chooses to love.”

“Yeah,” Brayla chimed in. “But I wonder how much of that is true. They say ‘can’t choose who you love’ or as Bishop says, ‘can’t control who your heart chooses to love.’ Same thing. But it’s kinda contradictory. I mean, we are responsible for our choices, so how can those statements be true? Don’t we choose who we want to be with, who we love?”

“Hmmm...that’s deep!” Nia shared. “Well, love is deep. In any relationship, you have to have resilience ‘cause love will test you and only the strong survive.”

“Whew!” Brayla hailed. “Not only that, love has so many elements--loyalty, trust, communication, consistency, oh and giving! As Bishop Murphy says, “There is no indication of love until giving takes place.””

In unison, they declare, “Amen to that!”

“Oh,” Nia reminded, “Let’s not forget love gives, and lust takes!”

“Yes, yes,” says this smooth, yet soft baritone voice as Nia, Sasha and Amerus look up. Brayla stared straight with a blank look on her face as Bishop smiled and said, “Good afternoon ladies, Brayla!”

Facing the Past

Just when you think you put the past behind, it has a way of showing up at the wrong dang time.

Bishop's abrupt appearance rushed Brayla and the girls off as Bishop persistently tried to communicate with Brayla. Brayla walked toward valet in agitation. As Sasha and Amerus drove off, Brayla and Nia stood waiting on valet to bring them Brayla's car.

In an infuriating tone, Brayla said, "Girl, I can't believe him! I don't know what to feel. How he just gonna pop up at our table, all smooth and debonair like everything's ok?"

"Girl, don't let him steal your joy," Nia said. "Dismiss it like his presence didn't make a difference and you're not bothered by his unannounced appearance."

As valet arrived with Brayla's car, Bishop walked up behind her. "Let me get that for you."

As he opened her car door, Brayla got in. Bishop smiled and said, "It was great seeing you, Brayla."

Brayla looked sideways at Bishop, closed her car door and drove off.

Brayla reminded Nia, "Six months girl. Six months, and he thinks he can just waltz his behind back into my life?! Seriously? Ugh!"

"Calm down, girl," Nia said. "I know you're emotional, upset and want to go deep on him, but exhale. Focus. Play your cards right. He's just tryna feel you out to see if he can get back in. Girl, don't play his game and definitely don't pay him any attention. I promise the chase will begin – but don't let him back in if that's what you want. Listen. Be honest with yourself and how you truly feel about him. I know it's been six months, but your feelings may be suppressed. It's okay, girl. Take

ownership of those feelings and embrace your relationship, keeping in mind the cost that comes with it. Ask yourself if it's worth it. Be up front with him and set your boundaries. Girl, God's gotcha boo."

"You're right, I can handle this. Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world. I'm strong. I got this," Brayla confirmed, reassuring herself.

"Just remember, a guilty conscience doesn't need an introduction. A relationship is either going in two directions – marriage or a break-up. You meet a person to get to know them and once you know it's not going anywhere and neither one of you are growing, then somebody needs to be bold enough to end it. But if you don't say anything and he knows you're there and you don't put a demand on him, he'll continue to flow with you until...you're not his booty call! You're making it easy for him to expect so much and give so little."

"Sometimes, being beautiful can be a blessing or a curse. You become immune to the pain and rejection. You build this wall of security to protect your heart and all men become the same. You keep your guard up, and you're always armed and ready. Most people don't recognize the defense mechanism. It takes someone who really has good intentions to see the charade and see past all the hurt and your insecurities. To be honest, his disappearing acts remind me of my father. How can someone who claims they love you just up and leave you? Feeling confused and abandoned without any explanation of what's going on with them? This can't be love, but my heart is so committed to him."

Brayla pulled up in front of Nia's house. They hugged and Nia said, "He knows what he is doing. He has never been willing to terminate his relationship with his wife. Not saying that you have ever asked him to. I just want you to be very informed of your choice and know you have options. I'll call you later, girl."

Brayla drove off in deep thought about Bishop's unannounced appearance. "Lord, this cannot be happening to me. I can't believe this dude. After all this time, he wants to make himself noticeable. Why? What could Mr. Bishop Moore have up his sleeve? Lord, protect me and shield me for what's about to come, in Jesus' name, Amen! I guess the time is coming for the truth to come out. Lord, help me and strengthen me."

Thinking back to when Bishop and I first began developing our relationship, I was so hesitant. I should have stuck to my guns, but the look in his eyes when he realized I intentionally had shown no interest and had not entertained the thought of returning any of his calls was a Kodak moment. The look on his face was priceless! So that evening, I sent him the first of many texts to follow, wishing him safe travels. Amazed, but not fully surprised of his response, "You just made my day. I will

definitely keep in touch. As crazy as it seems, I couldn't stop lookin' at you in your eyes or thinkin' about you. I hope you don't think bad of me. Hope you got home safe, too."

The very next day, bright and early, my phone lit up with text messages from him, from 'good morning beautiful' to 'I hope you're having an amazing day...I'll call later.' I must admit, they were beginning to be a little bit annoying. He had officially become my bugaboo! All jokes aside, I explained to him that we could be no more than friends.

His reply was, "A friendship with you is more than enough. I just want to get to know you. I think you're a real cool person, that's all."

"Yeah right," I said. "Bishop seriously, what's your target?"

"I have none really. I just think you're beautiful, that's all! A friendship with you is more than enough for me. I wouldn't have it any other way. And no, I didn't think I would hear from you. Glad though, you seem so cool to be around. Talk to you soon sweetie. Goodnight!"

Bishop pressed in hard for weeks, even after I told him to stop communicating with me. I think he only heard my 'not interested' as a 'yes' and it just made him more persistent. My phone was like clockwork. From 8 a.m. to midday to late in the evening, Bishop made sure that he was not far from my thoughts.

"Hey cutie! Just thinkin' about you. How's your day goin'? Have I crossed your mind any? ☺ Just curious to know."

Could this dude be serious?! Does he have a hearing problem or is he just afraid to accept rejection?

Finally, I screamed, "BISHOP! Stop! Have you paid attention to anything I've said or texted over the last six weeks?"

"Yes, I have," Bishop replied. "I just would like to get to know you, no other intentions...really! I'm a big flirt obviously, and I think you're very attractive. But my comments are only intended to brighten up your day a little, not do anything more. Who really has control over who stays on their mind anyway? Am I starting to bother you for real?"

"What? Is he for real," Brayla said to herself. "Dude," I explained in the calmest voice, "I've been telling you for weeks I'm not interested and to stop all communication. But you must be a little slow because you have not respected my wishes. What's up with you?"

"Okay, Brayla. I get it. I'll stop. I still think you're sexy as heck though. ☺" Bishop added.

Brayla laughed to herself.



Later that evening, Bishop convened with his family for their annual family reunion. The life of the party, so to speak, is his manta as he mingles with his family enjoying the festivities. Nyla, his wife, is petite, gorgeous, in love with God and has a career in Business Administration. She's been in love with Bishop since college and four kids later, he is still the love of her life. They were together eight years before getting married and are now on the brink of their 18-year anniversary.

She's in love with him and he's in love with her. They are the ideal couple for the romantic at heart; a love to be admired by family and friends. Bishop's children adore him and he is passionate about his kids. However, Nyla has no clue about her husband's unfaithful activities, nor would she ever conceive Bishop to dishonor their vows.

Bishop loves his wife and children. But he has become smitten by Brayla Thompson, a woman he can't seem to shake for whatever reason, the one who has captured his heart. His love for her has become intense and he finds that he has to put his feelings in perspective in order to find balance between his wife and Brayla.

The Return of the Mac

Just when you think love has found a new home, it finds its way back on your door step.

“It’s Sunday, the sun is shining, and Bishop Murphy was on point with the word this morning. My ‘angels’ are more beautiful with each day! Oh, how I love my babies. Lord, you have truly blessed me –thank you!” exclaimed Brayla. The phone rang and it was Nia.

“Hello, hey girl! How’s your Sunday?”

“Brayla, girl you were on my mind this morning in service. Just had to give you a jingle to see how you’re doing.”

“Nia, girl it’s all good. I’m not trippin’ off that, Bishop – whatever!”

“That’s my girl,” Nia shouted. “Well let me get dinner started. We’ll chat later.”

“Ok, enjoy the fam,” Brayla said.

Shortly after Bishop and I met, we dated off and on over a course of six years before our recent separation, which ended after eight months from our last breakup. This was a mutual, yet emotional time for me. I never told Bishop, but I was three months pregnant when we separated. Two months later, I met someone and we dated for a year before he got deported to Germany. It didn’t matter to him that I was expecting. We never talked about Bishop – in fact, everyone assumed my baby was his because we were together. Five months later, Bishop and I got back together before our last separation. I never told Bishop about my pregnancy to this day. I think about it every time I look into my baby’s eyes. I figured things are good the way they are. Why bring it up? I know he has a right to know, so don’t judge me. But, we came close before and his response was, “I don’t need that kind of stress in my life, ever!”

That's what most men say when they know they have to explain a child to another woman. It's funny though, in the heat of the moment 'stress' is far from the mind as he's screaming out your name!

We'll cross that bridge if and when we get there. Ironically, when we got back together, he never put two and two together or I guess he never really looked my baby in the face long enough to question anything. Who does that after a short term breakup – not count up the months or at least bring it to the table for discussion? I guess he must have been focused on what was in front of him on the real home front, or he just didn't want to know.

He was a little taken back that I had another baby, but he never made it seem as if it was a major concern. Could it have been that he already knew? Maybe he was just afraid to ask a question that he really didn't want an answer to.

"Mom," DJ yelled.

"Yes babe."

"I'm about to take Symone to the park."

"Ok, be careful and make sure you keep your eyes on her!"

"Yes ma'am," DJ said.

As Brayla looked out her bedroom window to watch her kids, a car pulled up outside her house. She moved in closer to the window and to her surprise, it was Bishop.

"Oh, heck naw! I just know he didn't just pull a pop up," she mumbled.

Bishop got out of his car and proceeded to walk up to Brayla's front door. Before he could make it to the driveway, Brayla greeted him from the garage.

"Bishop?" Brayla blurted out in a stern voice, trying to act surprised. "What are you doing here?"

"Well a happy Sunday to you as well," Bishop said. "I was out enjoying the day and you came across my mind and so, here I am."

"You don't have those privileges anymore," Brayla reminded him. "Honestly Bishop, what do you want?"

"Why you gotta be so mean Brayla, and why do I have to want something? Brayla, it was just really good seeing you the other day, even though it was for a moment. I miss you. I want you back in my life."

"Ha..." Brayla said to herself. "Even if it's for a little while. Bishop, please. Seriously, we can't do us again. You're married, in case you forgot."

“Brayla, stop! You honestly can look me in the eye and tell me that you don’t feel the same? My love for you is real and when I saw you, it all came back. I love you Bray. Why can’t you see that?”

“If you can use the L word as loosely as you have with me, then it’s true...love is not the opposite of hate. Selfishness is. I think you should leave now,” Brayla said, in an uncomfortable tone.

“For real Brayla! Wow. I guess you’re not going to answer my question?”

“Bishop, your wife is calling...”

“Oh so you got jokes, Brayla? Alright I’ll leave. But I meant what I said.”

Brayla stood silently as she watched Bishop walk to his car. In her mind, she said, “Lord, help me for what I’m feeling. Give me strength to overcome. Bishop’s always been on point in reading me. I pray he’s lost his touch.”

Brayla’s mind flashed back to when Bishop and she first met. It was at a business networking function given by one of Brayla’s businesses. Bishop was in conversation when Brayla approached his table to greet everyone. He was taken aback at how stunningly beautiful Brayla was. Her presence was a ray of light. His eyes lit up and his smile was as high as a mountaintop!

“Hello, I’m Bishop Moore. It is by all means a pleasure to meet you,” he said as he extended his hand for that one opportunity to embrace hers.

“Great to meet you, Bishop Moore. Enjoy your evening and thanks for coming,” Brayla said as she proceeded to walk away. Bishop excused himself and grabbed Brayla’s attention. He extended his hand once again, hoping that this time, she’d accept.

Brayla smiled as she grabbed his hand and said, “Oh, I apologize. I wasn’t trying to be rude by not shaking your hand.”

“No problem...no problem at all,” Bishop said in an eager, yet jittery tone.

“So what is it that you do, Bishop?” Brayla asked.

“I’m the Executive Director of IT at Tabor & Tabor.”

As quickly as their conversation began it also ended. A soft voice called out Bishop’s name, “Bishop! Bishop!” the mysterious woman yelled. “You ready?” she asked as she smiled, enclosing her arm into his.

Brayla smiled and looked to Bishop for a formal introduction of the woman.

As Bishop proceeded to make an introduction, a business partner and best friend of Bishop’s named Ken intervened, “Great job man on that presentation today!”

As if Ken had just saved him from the most awkward moment of his life, Bishop exclaimed, “Thanks Ken!”

The woman nudged Bishop to head toward the door. Bishop offered his apologies to Brayla and asked to reconvene their conversation soon. Brayla offered her card and wished the couple a peaceful evening.

“I should have known then his intentions were no good,” Brayla said to herself as she sat outside shaking her head. Looking down the street, she w