

**CAGED BIRD,
ARISE**

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Preface

This book outlines real issues that we encounter on this journey of life. The purpose of this writing is to show the readers that whatever you're dealing with you don't have to suffer in silence. Most importantly it serves as a gentle reminder that we can always find comfort in sharing our hurt and disappointments with God. God loves you beyond anything that you can imagine and will always be by your side. The biggest tactic of the Enemy is to make you believe that God has abandoned you.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1

Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

Kashvi shares the plight of her young adult life with hopes to inspire others to rise above their circumstances and pursue God wholeheartedly. She grew up in Hosur, which is a small town located in the region of Tamil Nadu (Southern India). As a child, she was always very inquisitive. Kashvi wanted to know the depth of who she was and why she was created. In school, she heard many theories about how the world began. Some believe in Darwin’s theory of evolution, while others believe in the Big Bang Theory. She honestly didn’t know what or who to believe. Was there a God? That was the greatest question she so desperately longed to answer. Kashvi is just like many people today, trying to navigate this journey of life while finding her life purpose.

We all have a story to tell and unique experiences that help shape and mold our character. Whether those experiences are good or bad all depends on individual perspectives. For many years, Kashvi struggled to accept herself and find love within herself. But now that she is older and possesses a

little more wisdom, Kashvi couldn't be prouder of the woman she has become. She has a beautiful array of confidence, but this hasn't always been the case. Kashvi used to think she wasn't good enough or pretty enough. So, she would often fall into this bottomless pit of constantly comparing herself to others. Two quotes always come to mind: "Comparison is the thief of all joy," and "You will never be good enough for the wrong people." That is very true because there were times when Kashvi would seek validation from external sources, which can be lethal. Sometimes people are on an assignment from the enemy to destroy your self-worth so you won't ever show up in the world the way God designed you to.

Needless to say, that mentality led to an identity crisis, which, in turn, was a long dark road of depression, suicidal thoughts, and ultimately running away from God's presence. Her story may be a little similar to a lot of women, so hopefully it can be a source of inspiration to remind you everything will work out exactly the way it is supposed to in divine timing. But the key is learning to trust the timing of your life and, most importantly, learning to trust in God. Sometimes you have to pause, take a good look in the mirror, and kindly remind yourself that **YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL, YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ENOUGH, AND YOU WILL ALWAYS BE ENOUGH.** So go ahead put the book down, go look in the mirror and speak. **I AM BEAUTIFUL, I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ENOUGH, I WILL ALWAYS BE ENOUGH.** How did that make you feel? Good right! Well, I encourage you to do that on a daily basis, because we have to kill the negative narrative in our head. We have to get into the habit of seeing ourselves

as God does and not allowing the lies of the enemy to taunt us.

In her adolescent years, it's safe to say that Kashvi was like a flower that so desperately wanted to bloom. She was trying to bloom in the midst of the weeds that tried to choke the life out of her purpose before she could even realize who she was intended to be. In other words, her environment wasn't always conducive to the greatness that she was carrying. Kashvi always knew she was different; she could feel it, but she just couldn't quite explain it. For many years, she suffered with identity crisis and settling for who others said she was. The guys would call her "ugly" and the girls said she was "weird." At a young age, she began to accept and walk in that identity given to her by those who didn't even know who they were. Growing up, she didn't have many friends, so that ultimately led to low self-esteem and frequent feelings of inadequacy throughout middle and high school.

Kashvi had a very difficult time in high school, just trying to find herself, so things only got progressively worse as her desire to fit in intensified. Still not mature enough to fully understand that there was a God who had a purpose for her—a purpose that wouldn't allow her to fit in no matter how hard she tried—she shed many tears in her alone time wondering why she was so different than others her age. Kashvi carried a beautiful light, and little did she know that

the greatness that God has instilled in her required isolation even when she was too young to comprehend the meaning of it all.

During her senior year of high school, things took a bad turn and REALLY began to go downhill. Senior year of high school is supposed to be a happy time for most people—preparing for prom, graduation, then embarking on a new journey as a college student. But for Kashvi, that wasn't the case as she had stress that the typical teenage kid didn't. One day, she was in town shopping at the farmer's market with her brother and Daada (grandfather) Ahaan. It was a beautiful spring day and the temperature was perfect for shopping. As the three of them walked in the park eating their favorite ice cream, Kashvi noticed something that both troubled and intrigued her. She gazed into her grandfather's eyes and noticed that they had a yellowish color to them. She kind of just brushed it off and went about her day, but later that evening, she decided to do some research to see what causes someone's eyes to turn yellow. As she researched, she discovered that the condition was known as jaundice, which can be caused by a variety of issues. However, the most common are inflammation of the liver, bile duct, and obstruction of the bile duct.

Kashvi was experiencing a whirlwind of emotions that she didn't know how to decipher. She didn't know if she should approach her grandfather and ask him, or if she should just ignore it as if nothing ever happened. But there is one thing for certain—life isn't always sunshine and rainbows. There will be storms and cloudy skies with some curveballs and roadblocks along the way. You will have experiences that will LITERALLY try to suck the life right out of you.

Put yourself in Kashvi's young teenage shoes for a second and imagine one day you think you have your entire life all planned out. One moment everything is going as "planned", then BOOM, all of a sudden, there's a disruption to those plans. How would that make you feel? Most likely angry, confused, anxious... or something along those lines, right? Well, that was Kashvi. One moment she thought she had it all figured out—prom, graduation, college, medical school. But nowhere in those plans did she ever think her grandfather would be diagnosed with cancer.

It was a very hot, humid day and Kashvi was traveling on the bus to Theni, where her grandparents lived. When she arrived, she was very surprised to see that her Daada Ahaan wasn't tending to the garden as usual. The heat was scorching, so Kashvi assumed her grandfather was just inside where it was cooler. When she walked inside the cottage, she noticed her Daada looked different... he didn't look like himself at all. Kashvi hugged her grandfather as he proceeded to ask about her journey to Theni. Kashvi was extremely exhausted from her travels because the bus ride

took about three hours and twenty minutes. However, she could sense that her grandpa was either hiding or avoiding something. So, she asked, “Daada, are you alright? You don’t seem like yourself today.”

He responded by saying, “Kashvi, oh my sweet baby girl, I don’t want you to worry but I think you deserve to know the truth, Daada has been diagnosed with cancer.” Kashvi sat there frozen as if the world had suddenly come to a halt. She felt as if someone had reached inside of her chest, grabbed her heart, and shattered it into millions of pieces. It was like a flood of emotions all at once. She couldn’t fathom what she had just heard. Imagine being an 18-year-old trying to find your place in the world and everything you once knew was slowly fading away. She had so many questions and not enough answers. She felt betrayed by the same “God” that she wasn’t even sure she believed in.

Hurt can cause you to become naïve and susceptible to the enemy’s plan to destroy you. The greatest plan of the enemy is to distract you with the intention that you will forfeit your purpose. The enemy wants to make sure that you never walk into the fullness of who God intended for you to be, and he strategically uses lies and deceptive tactics to make you believe that you’re insignificant or that God doesn’t love you.

When Kashvi heard the devastating news that her grandfather had cancer, all of those thoughts and preconceived notions about whether or not God existed came rushing back. At that moment, she began to fall right into the enemy’s trap to make her feel as if God had completely abandoned her. Her world felt like the depths of

an erupted volcano. In the midst of the heartbreak, and not having a solid relationship with God or prayer life for that matter, Kashvi began to slip into the darkness of oblivion. The enemy had her right where he wanted her—lost, broken, confused, and vulnerable. Little did she know that this experience would mark the beginning of war. Kashvi was at war for her life, for her purpose, and for her mind.

Kashvi was always a threat to Satan and the kingdom of darkness, even when she didn't recognize who she was or the impact she would make in the world. That's why she was always a target on the enemy's hit list. Satan has been trying to annihilate her destiny since the beginning, with identity crisis, low self-esteem, depression, alcohol abuse... and now heartbreak. Life as she once knew it was different, and she began to question the purpose of her existence. Kashvi became more and more distant as she continued to slip deeper into depression. The enemy began to whisper lies in her ear and plant suicidal thoughts. Kashvi was crushed and she couldn't quite come to terms with it. She recalled moments in her childhood when her grandfather would talk about prayer and take her to the temple. She began to question, "How can there possibly be a god who doesn't even have a cure for cancer?"

Kashvi decided to stay in Theni for a few extra days to process it all and to make sure her grandfather was alright. During these few days, Kashvi and her grandfather spent hours looking at old family albums and laughing at Daada Ahaan's stories. It was such a joy for her to see her grandfather laugh and smile instead of sulk in his condition.

One of the greatest attributes that Kashvi admired about Daada Ahaan was his strength and ability to smile even through the worst circumstances. Although it physically looked as if there was something going on with her grandfather's health, his spirit was never broken. And to see him still smiling gave her a sense of reassurance that everything was going to be alright. That Sunday morning, Kashvi rose early to prepare breakfast for them. She made all of their favorites! She had beautiful fluffy blueberry pancakes, vegetable omelets, fresh-squeezed orange juice, and plenty of delicious-looking fruit. She even picked some beautiful azalea flowers! Her grandfather awoke to the sweet-smelling aroma that filled the cottage and was surprised because it wasn't too often that Kashvi would cook!

After breakfast, they walked to the nearby park enjoying the breeze and the beautiful sounds of nature. Grandpa Ahaan took a seat on the bench and invited Kashvi to sit next to him. He said, "My sweet baby girl, don't you know how much Grandpa loves you?"

Kashvi smiled and said, "Of course, Grandpa, and I love you more than the depths of the deepest ocean!"

Her grandfather then said, "I know that this news has taken you by surprise, baby girl, but I want you to know that your old grandpa will be just fine. Don't you worry."

"But, Grandpa, how am I not supposed to worry, how do I know you will be alright?"

"Kashvi, haven't I taught you anything about having faith? Do you remember growing up I would take you to the temple to

pray, and you would always ask why you should pray to a God you can't see?"

"Yes, I remember, Daada."

"And what did I tell you every time you asked me that?"

"You told me that prayer was essential communication in any relationship and establishing a relationship with God was no different."

"Yes, and what else did I tell you?"

"You told me that just because I couldn't see God doesn't mean he didn't exist or couldn't hear me when I prayed. But, Grandpa, how can I have faith knowing that you are sick? I'm so angry with God."

"Kashvi, listen to me... even after I am long gone, God will still be here to comfort you and wipe your tears. Right now, you may not understand it all but someday I know you will learn to know and love God for yourself."

After a few weeks passed, Kashvi continued to notice little things such as a change in his appetite, and decreased energy levels. Her grandfather spent more time sleeping and eating in bed, but she was right by his side to tend to his needs.

Despite her family's constant reassurance that her grandfather would be alright and pull through, deep down inside, Kashvi began to stress and worry non-stop. It crushed

her to the core to see the person who had played such a significant role in her life go through a difficult season in his. As the months went by, Kashvi spent more time with her grandfather, helping him to doctors appointments and taking him to his chemotherapy treatments.

In the summer of 2002, her grandfather had surgery that seemed to be a success according to the oncologist. They were able to remove all of the cancerous cells! Things looked as though they were finally turning around for the good and Kashvi was overjoyed to have her grandfather back. During the late fall of that same year, Kashvi even enrolled in her first semester at Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences.

She began taking prerequisites and a lot of science courses in order to prepare for medical school. Kashvi excelled greatly and really seemed to enjoy being a college student. She enjoyed it so much that she even declared a minor in psychology. That increased her course load but she continued to thrive and consistently maintain a 3.8 GPA. On the weekends, if she wasn't studying or doing homework,

she would travel back and forth to Theni to spend time with her grandfather. They both seemed to enjoy the time they spent together and Ahaan eventually got back to doing the thing he enjoyed the most, which was tending to his garden! Some days, Kashvi and her grandfather would sit for hours in the garden watching the birds and talking about life, God, and college. Kashvi told her grandfather about her classes and how she really enjoyed being a student. On Sundays, she would prepare for the long bus journey that awaited her. Two years passed and Ahaan was still cancer-free and Kashvi continued to make the weekend trips to Theni for their visits. Kashvi was always so ecstatic to share her grades with her grandfather and he was equally excited, looking forward to seeing her graduate!

It was January of 2005, the middle of winter and the air was so bitter and frigid. Kashvi hated winter but she was taking her grandfather for a routine checkup. They arrived at the hospital and notified the receptionist that their appointment was scheduled for 10:40 am. The medical assistant called them back to a procedure room and began with taking Ahaan's vital signs and weight. The medical assistant told them that the oncologist would be in shortly. After about five minutes, there was a knock on the door the doctor came in and asked them how things were going since the last visit three months ago. Ahaan told the doctor that some days he felt extremely fatigued and exhausted, but other than that, he was fine. The doctor told them that he wanted to run some tests just to be sure everything was alright. After the

tests and x-ray, the doctor told them they would receive the results in a few days.

About three or four days passed and the doctor called to notify them that the lab results were in and they should come to the hospital to discuss the results. Kashvi didn't think much of it, she just assumed that the hospital's policy prohibited them from giving the results over the phone. Once they were back at the hospital, the doctor came in with the results in his hand. Kashvi wasn't prepared for the news that awaited her and her grandfather. The doctor said, "Mr. Ahaan, we ran these tests because you complained of being exhausted some days and, unfortunately, the results show that the cancer has returned. This time, the cells are much more aggressive and metastatic, meaning the cancer has begun to spread to other parts of your body. Mr. Ahaan, we can do chemo and radiation if that is your wish, but because the cancer has progressed, in my medical opinion, I don't think it would help." Kashvi couldn't believe what she was hearing, she became flush in the face and lightheaded. The doctor arranged a taxi for the two of them because he could see that Kashvi was in no state to drive.

As the days passed, her grandfather became progressively weaker. This time around, Kashvi could see the pain in his eyes, she could see how his hands started to turn black because of the chemotherapy and radiation. She also noticed how sick and weak he would become after leaving his treatments. The fact is, the chemo and radiation were doing more harm than good at that point. Kashvi could see her grandfather slowly slipping away and there was nothing she could do.

Kashvi began to display signs of depression again, but this time, the depression seemed to eat away at her. Kashvi was always ambitious and goal-driven, so she tried to muster the strength to keep going. She still went to class although, most times, she wasn't able to focus because the thoughts of her grandfather ran rampant through her mind. After two months of receiving the news, her grandfather Ahaan decided to stop the chemo and radiation and agreed to be placed on hospice. The hospice nurse prescribed morphine for the pain and instructed the family to do whatever they could to keep Ahaan as comfortable as possible.

Growing up, Kashvi's grandfather would always tell her to be grateful for life and remind her that regardless of how she's feeling, every day that the Lord allows her to see is a good day. Her grandfather passed away on a Wednesday. The Saturday before he passed away, Kashvi was at her grandfather's cottage because the family had begun taking turns spending the night so that he wasn't alone during his last days. Kashvi asked her grandfather how he was feeling and he responded by giving a "thumbs down." That LITERALLY CRUSHED HER because throughout this entire journey, she never once heard him complain about pain or admit that he was having a rough day. Although her grandfather was an extremely strong man, she could sense that he was tired of suffering. Yet his faith never wavered because even in the midst of all the pain, cloudy skies, and this whole ordeal, her grandfather had an unexplainable level of peace.

A few days later, Kashvi was just finishing classes and waiting at the campus bus stop for the shuttle. She was especially happy to see Daada Ahaan to tell him that she passed her psychology and biology exam! However, as she was waiting for the bus, she received a text message from a close family friend that read, "So sorry to hear about your grandpa, I'm here if you need anything." At that very moment, her body went completely numb and she felt as if her entire life had shattered into billions of pieces right at that bus stop. She was devastated and tried so hard to hold back the tears but they continued to flow like a waterfall. Yet again, she found herself angry with God. She felt hurt, heartbroken, and betrayed. At that moment, she decided she was done with God. She was convinced that there was no way God could exist and watch her go through this type of heart-wrenching emptiness. She was convinced that God didn't love her.

After the funeral, the reality of everything had officially taken its toll. Kashvi had to accept that her grandfather wasn't coming back. That cottage where she spent many summers as a kid seemed cold, empty, and dark. There was an emptiness that she couldn't fathom—a void in her soul that she couldn't find the words to explain. Kashvi had never experienced heartbreak like this before. She felt abandoned. Although she knew her grandfather was no longer suffering, a part of her still wanted him back. She had never experienced the death of someone so close, someone who helped to raise her and shape her into the person she had become.

Kashvi grieved her grandfather's death for a VERY LONG TIME. Things started to go downhill quickly. She slipped back into a deep depression and no longer had the will to survive. Her values and integrity began to slowly diminish. Depression is a silent killer that comes in like a dark, heavy cloud and slowly tries to consume your identity. It will suck the life out of you, and the worst part is that many people fail to seek help due to shame or embarrassment, so they suffer alone. So, she suffered alone, battling suicidal thoughts. She got really good at perfecting her outer image. She got good at pretending she was fine. But her outer image didn't necessarily portray what she was feeling inside. Kashvi began contemplating ending her life. Some nights, she sat in her room and had thoughts of taking a bottle of pills. Her grades dropped, she stopped going to classes, and when she did go, she was too much under the influence of alcohol to focus. Kashvi had become a functioning depressed alcoholic. She would drink to numb the pain she felt. She turned to alcohol just so she could get through the day. The old Kashvi was fading away and either she didn't realize it or she no longer cared. That beautiful light that she carried was getting dimmer from the depression. Depression isn't just a mental issue but it's a spirit.

Kashvi experienced a VERY DARK period in her life. She felt hopeless and defeated. But that's exactly where the enemy wants you... out of the Lord's presence so that he can continue to infiltrate seeds of worthlessness into the garden of your mind. The enemy had a strategic plan to annihilate Kashvi from existence so that she would never fulfill the purpose for why she was created. Believe it or not... we are

actually a threat to the enemy, and just like Kashvi, sometimes we fail to recognize how powerful we are, especially during those “valley” experiences where our vision becomes distorted.

However, the enemy realized Kashvi’s great potential. He knew exactly who she was and the greatness that she was carrying. That’s why he literally used EVERYTHING in his arsenal to try to distract and destroy her. I would like to remind you that you were created for such a time as this. Regardless of what you are experiencing at this very moment in your life, be encouraged and reminded that the enemy doesn’t waste time on empty vessels or insignificant people. He understands that if you ever walk into the fullness of who and what God intended for you to be, you’re going to be bold, tenacious, and powerful.

I think this is the perfect place to stop and give you some encouragement and remind you that **YOU ARE NOT INSIGNIFICANT! YOU ARE SPECIAL**, you are important, and you were **STRATEGICALLY** created and placed on this earth for a purpose.

The enemy is extremely deliberate in his pursuit to destroy you, which is why it’s imperative that we not only refrain from denying that he exists but also stop viewing Satan as this caricature with red horns and a pitchfork. Satan is very real and also very clever—the bible even warns us that he is a competent adversary when we are reminded to “put on the

full armor of God, so that you may stand against the wiles of the devil” [Ephesians 6:11].

The more Kashvi ran away from God’s presence, the deeper she fell into the enemy’s trap. She had absolutely no desire to know God. She still harbored anger. She HATED GOD... that’s right. As the years passed, Kashvi tried hard to move past the grief, she eventually went back to school and finished her degree. She was beginning to adjust to this new life—life without her grandfather around. But something was missing, she still had a void that she tried so desperately to fill. She was constantly searching for satisfaction and fulfillment only to realize it was temporary.

No matter the success and accomplishments she achieved, Kashvi was never truly happy. The enemy continued in his relentless pursuit. HE WANTED KASHVI DEAD. As long as he could keep her away from God in that wild state of mind, she would never realize who she was and that’s exactly what he wanted. His desire was to keep her distracted by any means necessary. He continued to feed her lies, and Kashvi continued to overdose on his deception. Kashvi was symbolic of the walking dead... she was a zombie. Although she was physically alive, there was no life in her. She was merely just existing. Her spirit was dead and she wasn’t even aware how she was fading away into the darkness of oblivion.

Years passed and Kashvi found herself stuck in a perpetual cycle of depression. She couldn’t shake it despite the fact that it had been nearly six years since her grandfather passed away. She was still trying to find herself, so she thought a

change of scenery would help. She transferred her job to Indonesia and she seemed to love it there. She met some amazing people and even began to do charity work to fight hunger in Ubud, Indonesia. Kashvi found that she had an incredible passion for community outreach, so she spent a vast majority of her time organizing different events and volunteering for various non-profit organizations.

One day, Kashvi and some friends were cleaning up after a long day of serving food to the locals in the community. Her friend, Daniel, started talking about his plans to attend a youth service at the church later that evening and invited Kashvi to come along. She was hesitant because it had been years since she stepped foot in a church. The last time she prayed was with her grandfather in the garden almost eight years prior. Reluctantly, she agreed to accompany Daniel to the church service.

Kashvi had never experienced anything like it. When she used to go to the temple in India, there was no dancing or anything, just people praying. She was amazed to see so many young adults around her age genuinely having a great time. Later in the service, Pastor Jake began to preach, and ironically, his message was about God's love. That grabbed Kashvi's attention because she couldn't believe that God would still love someone who doubted his existence and had all those negative feelings towards him. She sat upright in her seat and asked Daniel if what the pastor said was true. Daniel told her that God loves us more than we could ever think or imagine. It was like God planned everything and was waiting for the perfect opportunity to remind Kashvi of his great love for her. Towards the end of the service, Pastor Jake asked

Kashvi to stand because he had never seen her there before. He told Kashvi that God loved her so much and even though she ran away from him, he never left her side. He said that although she felt abandoned, God was always watching out for her because she was special. He also told Kashvi that God wanted to heal her broken heart because he had a purpose and amazing plans for her life.

The next week, Daniel invited Kashvi to church again, but this time, she wasn't hesitant... she was actually looking forward to it! Daniel agreed to pick her up at 10 am so Kashvi said that she would be waiting outside. When they arrived at the church, Kashvi was excited to go inside to hear the music and dancing. This time, the pastor recognized Kashvi and told her that he was happy to see her back again! After his sermon, he said something so profound that shifted the trajectory of Kashvi's young life. He told her that the hand of God was on her and that her grandfather loved her so much that he was leaving her a spiritual impartation.

Before the service ended, the pastor asked if anyone wanted to give their life to Christ. Kashvi stood up and walked to the front of the church. She wasn't sure what all that meant but she knew it wasn't a coincidence that the pastor had a message just for her two weeks in a row. The pastor prayed for her and reminded her that from this moment on, her life would never be the same. In the car as Daniel was driving Kashvi back home, he noticed that she was very quiet and just stared out the window for most of the ride. He asked if she was alright and she told him yes but she wasn't sure what it meant to give her life to Christ. Daniel told her that it

was an act of surrender and that she could pray to God for guidance and direction.

Kashvi was excited to embark on this new journey. She attended services regularly with Daniel and even started to get involved. She joined the choir and the outreach ministry and even attended the young adult bible studies that were held each week. Although she had started going to church, she still struggled with the voice of the enemy from time to time. The enemy continued to whisper lies—he was relentless. He didn't want Kashvi to find her purpose.

There was a part of her that wanted to really know God but then there was a part of her that refused to surrender ALL. As long as she continued to have one foot in and one foot out, God couldn't really move in her life the way he deeply desired to. Not to mention that made her more susceptible to the attacks of the enemy... which were plenty. She continued to attend church throughout the years and she had really grown to love the people there. Everyone was down-to-earth and accepting and she especially appreciated how the pastor broke down the bible and taught in a way that anyone could understand.

About eight years after she had joined the church, she began writing a fictional book for little children. She wanted to get her pastor's perspective on it, so she scheduled to meet with him in order to discuss the direction of her book idea. During the meeting, Pastor Jake began to tell her how important she was to God and God really wanted to do amazing things in her life but she had to fully surrender. He told her that she no longer had to hide in the shadows of past mistakes and guilt

because God had already forgiven her. Kashvi had to learn how to forgive herself. He called her a great woman of God and continued to speak life into her. Before the meeting ended, he told Kashvi that she had to be mindful of who she surrounded herself with because the greatness that she was carrying was valuable. Kashvi broke down in tears because she had no idea how special she really was to God because no one had ever told her that before.

After the meeting, she kept replaying the words of her pastor in the back of her mind, but the enemy wasn't far away. He began to offer contradictory thoughts, telling her that it wasn't true, she wasn't important, and God didn't have a plan for her. It never failed—Kashvi couldn't escape the grip that he had on her. Since she didn't really study the bible as much as she should, she wasn't able to combat the negative thoughts. Kashvi began to second guess what her pastor told her and thought that she wasn't good enough to live up to the woman that God called her to be. As a result, she ran away... not physically, but in her heart. Kashvi ran away from her purpose, from her calling, and she eventually ran away from God... AGAIN.

She allowed the voice of the enemy to be louder than God's voice. Consequently, she paid a very expensive price for it. One day, she was sitting in her room and began to wonder how all of her friends were either married or in relationships. Prior to that, she hadn't really given it much thought but the enemy started once again in his pursuit to distract her and

get her off focus. She downloaded a dating app on her phone, made a profile, and began to scroll. She spent days scrolling through that app in her spare time searching for the “perfect” companion.

She had absolutely no clue that she was blindly walking right into the enemy’s trap. She came across the profile of a guy named Adam. Adam had a very mysterious look and she thought he was attractive, so she sent the first message. After about a week, Adam responded to Kashvi’s message by introducing himself. The two eventually exchanged phone numbers and talked frequently on the phone, hoping to build a connection. Days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months and they seemed to really hit it off. They began spending more time together and Kashvi began to spend less time with God and going to church.

Everything was so subtle in the beginning, but little did she know, Adam was testing her boundaries in order to see what he could get away with. Kashvi was completely blinded by the illusion that Adam presented to her. Kashvi had tried countless times to invite Adam to church with her but each time he refused. Around month six of dating, Adam began to verbally abuse Kashvi, telling her that she was worthless, and he surely didn’t hesitate to tell her how stupid he thought she was any time she failed to do something he wanted. Kashvi didn’t understand what was going on and how this man she thought was so perfect in the beginning could talk to her in that manner. Adam was extremely manipulative and cunning to get his way. He continuously challenged the

barriers of her boundaries. Adam was symbolic of a military platoon preparing for war. He had spent months studying his victim. He knew her weaknesses, he knew that she didn't have any boundaries, and he knew how to be charming enough so she would let down her guard. Oh, that man was the epitome of evil. Kashvi had confided in Adam all of her deepest fears and past traumas, but she had no idea that he was storing all of that information only to use it against her later.

Adam could see that Kashvi yearned for love and she would do anything for it. He preyed on her every second of the day. He never intended to love her—his only purpose was to destroy every fiber of her being. Kashvi slowly started to distance herself from friends and she stopped going to church altogether, so ultimately, all she had was Adam... or so she thought. And that's exactly how he wanted it. He wanted to pull her away from her support system.

After the first year of dating, the abuse intensified but she kept telling herself that things would change for the better. It remains a mystery as to whether Kashvi actually believed that Adam possessed the ability to change or if she simply refused to accept the fact that the illusion he presented was a fabrication. Whatever the case may be, the fact is that Kashvi was losing herself once again. Adam's deliberate abuse on her self-esteem was diabolical. Adam was pure evil wrapped in the disguise of a man she was once willing to give up everything for. He repeatedly belittled her. Kashvi

continued to endure this pain in silence because, foolishly, she didn't want others to judge her or her pain to be misconstrued as a weakness. SO, SHE STAYED with a man who couldn't see her value. A man who failed to recognize the greatness that she was carrying. A man who did everything in his power to deliberately dim her beautiful light.

Kashvi was slipping into the depths of darkness as he continued to torment her mind. Adam wanted to control the very essence of who she was. The majority of the time, Kashvi was such an emotional wreck that she couldn't think logically. There were days when all she wanted was peace because there was so much turmoil, chaos, and confusion that it nearly drove her to the edge of insanity, and Adam loved it. He loved that this woman who was once full of life and light was becoming weak right before his eyes. She couldn't understand how this man who seemed so perfect in the beginning could be so evil. Adam was a dark, twisted man. He made her think that the abuse was all an illusion. He made her believe that this is what she deserved. Adam was cunning, he knew how to be charming around others. She couldn't understand how he treated her like the scum of the earth but pretended to be so sweet to everyone else. IT WAS ALL AN ILLUSION. Adam had created the perfect façade.

Despite all of the abuse she endured, she thought she loved him. She thought she could change him. The truth is, Adam was changing her. She suspected that he was cheating on her and even when confronted or presented with evidence, he knew how to turn the tables. Kashvi would get an unexplainable feeling in the pit of her stomach. She could

sense that something wasn't right but she had lowered her boundaries so much in the past that she no longer trusted her intuition. As a result, she fell prey to Adam's gaslighting and triangulation tactics. He convinced her that she was delusional, so Kashvi began to question her own judgment. Was she really losing it? Was all of this in her mind?

She was stuck in a perpetual cycle of abuse and she couldn't see the light at the end of the tunnel. Sometimes all she had the strength to do was go to work and come home to sleep. She had grown accustomed to the darkness that had gripped her soul. One year passed, then two... Kashvi finally came to the realization that Adam was never going to change, and if she stayed, she probably wouldn't live to tell her story. Kashvi wanted to leave but she couldn't. It wasn't that easy—her abuser had beaten her to the core and never once laid a hand on her. Abuse isn't always physical, some scars are harder to detect. Adam was an EMOTIONAL, MANIPULATIVE, SPIRITUAL abuser who taunted her with threats. He threatened to kill her family and friends if she ever left him. Adam told her that he was well connected and even if he did do time, he would get off with one year at the max and make her life a living hell. Kashvi was afraid of this man who had become a stranger. She wanted to protect her family at all costs even if that meant sacrificing her own life. Adam was the devil in disguise.

Before she knew it, she had wasted three years of her life with someone who wanted to destroy her. The mask was fully off, no more pretending—he was on a mission to

annihilate her. This was no typical relationship. How could it be? She could not relate to this demon because she was the light. Kashvi had come face to face with darkness. An evil darker than the depths of the abyss. Darker than the depths of the pacific. Kashvi was entangled with an evil so dark, even the darkest shade of black couldn't compare to it. She was entangled with the spirit of death. The enemy comes to STEAL, KILL, AND DESTROY. Adam was sent on an assignment to steal her joy, kill her purpose and destiny, and destroy the beautiful essence of who she was and called to be.

Kashvi was at war for her life and she wasn't equipped for this fight. She ran away from God, so she was alone in the wilderness, unprepared to battle the spirits that were after her. She was tormented day and night relentlessly. This was an evil that she had never encountered before. An evil that she underestimated. The suicidal thoughts ran rampant through her mind. She stopped fighting. She had accepted that this was her lot in life and she wanted so desperately to die. Kashvi was at the edge. She had reached her breaking point. She thought there was no escape because the enemy had strategically placed her in a trancelike state of mind. Her thoughts were not her own. Kashvi was under oppression by the enemy. She was enslaved to the misery that consumed her. The enemy made her believe that there was no way out. He made her believe that God didn't need her anymore because she was as worthless as used cargo. How did Kashvi end up here? A woman so full of purpose, so full of potential, yet she was living like a peasant.

One day, Kashvi remembered the conversation that she had with Pastor Jake almost three years prior. She heard a small

voice reminding her that God loved her more than she could ever think or imagine. So, she cried out to God and prayed, “Lord, forgive me for my sins but take this man out of my life or kill me.” She had nothing to lose at that point, and she figured that if God didn’t intervene, she would never escape the grip of the enemy. After three years of emotional and spiritual torment, Kashvi rose the cage that held her captive for so long. To her surprise, the cage was never locked, it only appeared that way because of her thoughts. That day, she decided to no longer be a caged bird. Kashvi realized she was created to be free. She was created to soar above the lies and deceptive tactics of the enemy. In that moment, she decided that just like the Prodigal Son, she didn’t have to live like a peasant. She didn’t bother to pack anything. SHE LEFT ALL OF IT. SHE LEFT BEHIND ALL OF THE BAGGAGE THAT LEFT HER BOUND IN SHACKLES FOR YEARS. She was no longer afraid of Adam as she knew God would protect her. She wrote Adam a letter and left it on the bed, so when he returned to the house, the first thing he read was...

Dear Adam,

I’m leaving. For three years, you tormented me mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. The abuse I endured from you I don’t wish on anyone. Not even my worst enemy. You are a coward. You thought you left me drained. You thought you left me for dead. I can’t lie, I thought you did too, but just when you underestimated me, I developed a strength I didn’t even know I had. You belittled me to no avail. You told me how worthless I was repeatedly. I almost believed it, but little did you know that right before we met, someone told me how important I was to God. So, I held on to that in the midst

of all of your abuse. What's ironic is that everything you said I wasn't, I actually am. And everything you said I was, I'M NOT! You said I was ugly and worthless. But the truth is, I am beautiful, and I am carrying greatness. Adam, thank you for your darkness because you showed me that I am the light. Thank you for the abuse, the manipulation... all of it, from the bottom of my heart because in your effort to destroy me, I realized why I was created. The truth is, I'm really your worst nightmare and you know it. That's why you had to try so hard to distract me and tear me down because you knew if I ever woke up to the realization of who I am and walk into the fullness of who God intended for me to be, it would be over for you. Adam, I used to hate you because I wasted three years of my life and you never had intentions to love me. But I forgive you because you don't know what love is... you don't even love yourself, so how can you love someone else? I forgive you, Adam, not because you deserve it but because I deserve to be free. I forgive you because you didn't know who I was. You didn't know that I was the child of a king. So, today, I give you back all of your lies and deceptive tactics. I reject all of your myths. You can have it all back. Goodbye.

For the first time in three years, Kashvi felt FREE. She felt as though a two-ton weight had been lifted from on top of her. She could feel the freedom in her wings but she still had to prepare for the journey of healing and restoration that awaited her. She understood that the road ahead would not be an easy journey to travel and she also knew she couldn't do it alone. She needed God to walk hand in hand with her

through this process. Kashvi had endured abuse that you only read about in stories. She had suffered demonic attacks on her spirit and her self-esteem was shattered. Kashvi had lost EVERYTHING... HER JOY, HER PEACE, HER SELF. From the outside looking in, you would think it was merely impossible that she survived. Kashvi Basu is a miracle, she is evidence of God's amazing grace. She is proof that God's love for us runs deeper than the depths of the Euphrates.

Kashvi finally SURRENDERED to the call of God on her life. That attack from the enemy was designed to take her out. She knew it wasn't an accident, but God had allowed her to survive because he really did have a purpose for her. He came rushing in when he heard her cries. God came to her rescue because there was so much more in store. While on the journey of healing, Kashvi began running diligently in pursuit of God. She had come to a place of desperation. She desired to know more about this God who had saved her from the depths of the abyss. SHE IS THE CATALYST; SHE IS THE CHANGE. Kashvi is the one the enemy wishes he could've destroyed because, from that moment on, she dedicated her life to empowering others on abuse and the tactics of the enemy. Kashvi's story is a lot like some of you, so she wrote this letter to inspire you.

Dear Caged Bird,

Arise to your position of power

Don't shrink, don't cower

Despite what life throws at you

You are more than a conqueror

You are an overcomer in Christ... Jesus

You were created for great and amazing things

Don't fall for the lies and manipulation of the enemy

You must spread your wings and fly

You must protect the greatness that you're carrying inside

You are the light, and darkness is on an assignment to
destroy you

Come from behind, fearless one

Arise from the depths of the pit you've been living in

Come out from among them and be separate

Rise and leave behind the shackles that you were entangled
with

You were created to be free

You are the child of the only true and living king

Rise from the shackles of your mind

Rise and sever the grip from the evil one

Oh, caged bird, arise from your position of peasantry

Arise because God has given you authority

Oh, caged bird, arise because you are royalty

Arise beyond the self-imposed limitations

Arise above every spirit that's contradicting the Holy one

Arise above everything that has you captive

Arise and release the chains of your slavery

Oh, caged bird, arise and see yourself as God does

Arise and walk into the fulness of who you were called

Arise and don't be deceived

Oh, caged bird, arise and fix your ears intently to the Lord for he is calling

Arise for you are the catalyst, you are the change

Arise and listen so you can hear your purpose calling after you

Oh, caged bird, arise and release the very thing God has instilled in you

Arise, caged bird... arise

The nations are waiting for you to set the captives free

Arise because the day you hear his voice calling harden not your heart

Arise and be who you were destined to be

Oh, caged bird, arise and declare your victory

Arise and declare everything that has you bound must loose you and set you free

Caged bird, arise and spread your wings

PART 2

In Part 1 of *Caged Bird, Arise*, through Kashvi's story, we were able to witness real-life issues that plague many people today. One of the many tactics of the enemy is to keep you bound by those things so that you will lose focus on fulfilling your purpose on Earth. As a reminder, you were created for great and amazing things. In order to walk in purpose, we have to heal from the traumas of our past, otherwise, we won't be fully effective in the Kingdom of God.

STOP UNDERESTIMATING THE ENEMY

A few weeks ago, I was reading a bible plan called *The Full Armor of God*, and the author did an excellent job informing the readers that the things we perceive with our five senses are not the real issues that we need to spend time focusing on. I don't think the author was trying to discredit our emotions or invalidate our experiences. Rather, I believe she was simply trying to shift our awareness so that we can begin to focus on the root of those issues. In other words, everything that you can see in the physical world has a direct association with the wrestling match that is simultaneously

going on in the invisible spiritual world. We have to get into the habit of normalizing the fact that your enemy, THE DEVIL, is very real. The more oblivious we are in choosing to ignore the fact that the enemy is real will not make him disappear. While growing up, we used to ask my grandmother why she had dentures. She would always respond with this question, "What happens to things when you ignore them?" We would all say we didn't know, so she'd say, "When you ignore things, they disappear!" I had to throw in some humor but that is certainly not realistic... well, at least not in this case. Pretending that the devil doesn't exist is only detrimental to us. Just because you can't see your enemy doesn't negate the fact that he is still waging war behind the scenes. It only leaves us less prepared and less equipped for the battle. The more you disregard your enemy, the more damage he is free to do.

The devil is NOT a fictional character running around with red horns and a pitchfork. He is very real, very cunning, and very persistent in trying to destroy us. That's what we see portrayed in the media and comic books, so that's what people believe. It's not until you find yourself in a situation where the enemy is hitting you left and right where you finally come to yourself and say, "Ok, maybe the enemy is real." The purpose of this book is to help the readers become better equipped so that they're not caught off guard. In Ephesians 6:13, we are instructed "to put on the full armor of

God so that when the day of evil comes, we may be able to stand.” It is important to understand that there is a powerful influence that exists outside of our realm of perception. Most times, we are unequipped because we don’t see the devil as our enemy, therefore, we have a tendency to let down our guards. In Ephesians 6:12, it tells us that “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Have you ever served in the military, know anyone who has, or watched any movies with the military in it? I’m sure you can relate to at least one of those questions. Whether in real life or in the movies, the one thing they have in common is that they PREPARE FOR BATTLE. Regardless of whether they ever go into battle or not, they strategically prepare just in case.

I remember in high school I was in JROTC, I had that class either three or five times a week. Our sergeants had prepared a rigorous routine that kept us in shape, let me tell you! We ran at least three miles a day in full uniform in ALL elements—rain or sun, we were on that track! The one thing that I disliked the most about JROTC was doing pull-ups. I thought being a female, I would get some leniency but they

were not having that whatsoever! They would tell us, “You knew what you signed up for.” So, although you most likely can’t relate to the JROTC example, the point is that it’s better to be prepared. In the moment, that rigorous training didn’t feel good at all but it wasn’t until I began to see the results that I understood the training was necessary. Not only did it help me to get in shape, but it also improved my endurance and strength. Understand this... when you are carrying greatness, the enemy is not far behind. He is constantly strategizing for your demise.

Now that we are aware that the enemy exists, we have to talk about how he preys on your weaknesses and vulnerabilities. In the first part of the book, we saw how Kashvi suffered with low self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, depression, and identity crisis. Believe it or not, those are some of the same issues that people deal with on a daily basis. In Ecclesiastes 1:9, we are reminded that “what has been will be again, and what has been done will be done again, there is nothing new under the sun.” If we don’t truly

heal from our past traumas, we will continue to repeat that perpetual cycle. In order to fully heal, we have to get to the root of those issues. Otherwise, we will stay stuck, stagnant, and simply existing rather than truly living a fulfilled life—a purpose-driven life. We don't just wake up one day and decide, "Oh, today I'm going to have low self-esteem." Absolutely not at all. Instead, there was something in your life that triggered the issue that you're dealing with. Maybe low self-esteem is not your issue, but whatever it is, understand that you have to do the work in order to get to the root and begin to properly heal. Let's take Kashvi for example. Her issues of low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy didn't show up in her adulthood. It began in middle school when she was always considered an "outcast" or "misfit," but because she didn't address it then, it kept manifesting at different stages in her life.

It's time to be transparent. In order to begin the healing process/journey, we have to ask ourselves those difficult questions. That requires being honest and transparent with ourselves to understand that we do not have it all figured out. It's absolutely ok to not have it all figured out. It doesn't make you a failure. It doesn't mean you're inadequate, and it

certainly doesn't make you weak. It simply means that you are taking the first step to acknowledge that there is an issue because you cannot fix an issue that you refuse to acknowledge. An example of a question to ask yourself that will trigger a response is, "What happened in my life that caused this issue to arise?" "Why do I suffer with _____?" Take some time to really think about that, don't just skip over this exercise. You may not think it's beneficial but it is necessary. The title of this book was so strategic, I prayed for weeks until the Holy Spirit revealed it. We have to get to a place in our lives where we no longer allow the circumstances of our past to keep us in cages. When we begin to spend time with God and meditate on the word, we slowly begin to see the scars of our past being healed. The truth is, the enemy doesn't want you to be healed because you will continue to manifest from a place of brokenness. When operating from a place of brokenness, you are not 100% effective. That's why it's imperative that we take the necessary time to heal and ask the Holy Spirit to help us with that process. The enemy spends time studying your weaknesses. For example, if you have ever watched football or basketball, you understand the importance of watching replays in order to see what the opposing team is good at as well as their areas of struggle. Prime example, let's take Steph Curry... he is a wonderful shooter, so the opposing team has to do everything they can in order to prevent Curry from getting the ball. Steph didn't become a great shooter over night, he spent countless hours in the gym perfecting his shooting mechanics. I kind of got a little off topic but the purpose of that example was to show you how, in every arena, the opposition is studying their competition.

Yes, you are the enemy's competition. Why? Because if you ever walk into the fullness of who God has called you to be, you will most certainly be a threat to the enemy's camp. So, how does the enemy stop you? I'm glad you asked! The enemy stops you by ensuring that you don't heal, ensuring that you continue to stay entangled by your past, and by distracting you so that you don't ever realize who you are.

WHERE IS GOD IN MY GRIEVING PROCESS?

We have all suffered the loss of a loved one or friend at some point on our journeys. The grieving process is different for everyone, so no one can tell you how to feel or how long you should grieve. But as we could see from Kashvi's story, she ultimately blamed God for the death of her grandfather. She

felt that God had both betrayed and abandoned her. Whether we choose to admit it or not, some of us can relate to Kashvi. Well, let me speak for myself... when my grandmother passed away, I was very angry with God. That anger ultimately led me down a destructive path and away from God's presence. The enemy loves to see you hurt, vulnerable, and confused because that's where he can do his best work. Starting with planting seeds of deception, making you believe that God doesn't love you. The grieving process can be very painful—I am a witness to that. For years, I distanced myself from God. I actually stopped believing at one point. I didn't believe that God could possibly love me and allow me to experience such a devastating heartbreak. I wrote a poem about six years after my grandmother's death that I would like to share with you. However, what's interesting is that the tone at the beginning of the poem was that of an angry, misguided youth, but the tone at the end of my poem was of someone who had grown to know God personally.

BLOTCHES OF LIFE

AT ONE POINT IN MY LIFE, THERE WAS A STAIN OF ANGER
ENGRAVED ON MY HEART

IT FELT AS IF THE SUN NO LONGER SHINED ON ME

AND GOD WASN'T LISTENING

HOLD UP, PAUSE... REWIND

PERHAPS I SHOULD START FROM THE BEGINNING

AND OUTLINE HOW THIS STORY GOES

YOU SEE... LISTEN, MY LIFE WASN'T THAT PERFECT FAIRYTALE
FANTASY

AND IT CERTAINLY WASN'T CLEAR SKIES AND RAINBOWS

I'VE EXPERIENCED PAIN—THE WORST KIND IS HEARTBREAK

LIKE SOMEONE LITERALLY REACHED INSIDE OF MY CHEST,

GRABBED MY HEART AND WATCHED IT SNAP AND SHATTER
INTO PIECES

THAT'S HOW I FELT

IT WAS SIX YEARS AGO, AND THIS IS THE FIRST TIME

I'VE EVER TRULY SPOKEN ABOUT HOW MY GRANDMOTHER'S
DEATH MADE ME FEEL

I DON'T EXPRESS EMOTIONS VERY EASILY, SO UNDERSTAND
THIS IS STORTA HARD FOR ME

PRIDE CONSUMED THE INNER PARTS OF ME

AND I INTERNALIZED THOSE EMPTY FEELINGS

I DIDN'T WANT ANYONE TO JUDGE ME, OR FOR MY PAIN

TO BE MISCONSTRUED AS A WEAKNESS

SO, ALONE IN SILENCE, I SUFFERED BATTLING SUICIDAL
THOUGHTS AND DEPRESSION

I WOULD LAY IN MY ROOM AT NIGHT AND CRY

I GOT REALLY GOOD AT PRETENDING THAT I WAS FINE

BUT MY OUTER IMAGE DIDN'T NECESSARILY PORTRAY WHAT
I WAS REALLY FEELING INSIDE

WHEN YOU ARE HURT, VULNERABLE, DISCONNECTED,

THE ENEMY WILL MANIPULATE YOU... PLAY TRICKS WITH
YOUR MIND

AND TELL YOU ALL SORTS OF LIES LIKE...

"TONI, TAKE THE PILLS AND EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE."

OR, "TONI, GOD AIN'T REAL... WHO CARES IF YOU DIE?"

MAN, OH MAN, BROKEN AND CONFUSED, ALL OF THE
ABOVE...

IT WAS AT THAT MOMENT THAT I QUESTIONED,

"WHERE IS THIS GOD THAT YOU FAITHFULLY PRAYED TO,
GRANDMA?"

"WHERE WAS HE AND HOW COULD HE EVER POSSIBLY LOVE
ME AND WATCH ME GO THROUGH THIS SUFFERING?"

MAYBE IT WAS A DREAM, SOMEONE PLEASE TELL ME THAT
THIS ISN'T REAL

BUT WHY COULDN'T I WAKE UP FROM IT?

SO MANY QUESTIONS, NOT ENOUGH ANSWERS
HOW COULD I, HOW COULD ANYONE EVER POSSIBLY COPE
WITH THAT TYPE OF HEART-WRENCHING EMPTINESS?
HOW COULD THOSE DOCTORS NOT HAVE A CURE FOR
CANCER?
HOW COULD GOD ALLOW CANCER TO INVADE HER BODY
AGAIN?
HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO GO ON LIKE THIS?
WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO MEND THIS BROKENNESS?

(THIS PART WAS WRITTEN 12 YEARS LATER)

I FINALLY KNOW THE GOD THAT MY GRANDMOTHER PRAYED
TO!
FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION,
GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IS CONSTANT
I CRIED TO THE LORD AND, TO MY SURPRISE, HE ANSWERED!
MY GOD, MY GOD, I THOUGHT YOU HAD FORSAKEN ME
TRUTH BE TOLD, I NEVER REALLY KNEW YOU
SO, SATAN'S LIES AND DECEPTION WERE EASILY BELIEVABLE
IN THE WILDERNESS, YOU WERE FAITHFUL

IN THE DARKNESS, YOUR LOVE NEVER FAILED
EVEN WHEN I WAS MILES AWAY FROM YOUR PRESENCE
YOU DIDN'T HESITATE TO COME RUSHING IN WHEN I CALLED
YOU
YOU ARE MY GOD
I RUN TO YOU WHEN MY HEART IS OVERWHELMED
THE LORD IS NEAR TO THE BROKENHEARTED
AND SAVES THE CRUSHED SPIRIT
THE JOY OF THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH
BECAUSE I DON'T LOOK LIKE WHAT I HAVE BEEN THROUGH
GREAT IS THE LORD'S FAITHFULNESS
EVERY DAY, HIS MERCIES ARE NEW
12 YEARS LATER, GOD REMOVED THE ANGER
THAT WAS ENGRAVED ON MY HEART
AND REMINDED ME THAT HE NEVER STOPPED SHINING HIS
LOVE ON ME
AT THE LOWEST POINT IN MY LIFE WHEN I THOUGHT YOU
HAD ABANDONED ME
BUT YOUR WORD HAS REMINDED ME THAT HE HEALS THE
BROKEN-HEARTED AND BINDS UP THEIR WOUNDS

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE
COMFORTED

THE LORD IS GOOD

AND MERCIES ENDURE FOREVER

God loves each one of us more than we can ever imagine. The biggest lie of the enemy is to make you believe otherwise because when you are away from the presence of God, you are limited in your abilities to overcome. As I was writing this book, I watched a YouTube video titled, "YOU ARE GOD'S BELOVED CHILD." I don't think that was a coincidence whatsoever. I believe God wanted me to remind you that you are loved by such a gracious God. We are reminded in Romans 8:38-39, "Neither death nor life, angels or demons, neither the present nor future, or any powers, neither height nor depth, or anything else in all creations will be able to separate us from the love of God." I don't know about you but it gave me chills to know that regardless of what I go through in life, I am not alone.

God is waiting to walk hand in hand with you along this journey of life, but you have to invite him in by asking him to be your lord and savior. Contrary to popular belief, you don't need to have everything together. God loves brokenness, God loves when you are weak because that's when his strength is magnified. God loves to take what others consider "damaged goods" and turn them into masterpieces! God is with you in your grieving process, God hears your cries but don't take my word for it. Psalm 56:8, "You keep track of all my sorrows and you have collected all my tears in your bottle."

Next time when you're experiencing grief and trying to work through the hurt, remember that you are not alone in that process. You have a friend that will stick closer than a brother, someone who will walk you through the healing process and mend the pieces of your brokenness.

HEALING FROM ABUSE

In Kashvi's story, we saw the aftermath of abuse and how it slowly started to change who she was. Maybe you've seen movies, heard stories from friends, or were the victim of

abuse yourself. Whatever the case may be, no one suddenly wakes up one day with the intention of becoming a victim of abuse. I'm not sure if you were able to pick up on the subtle characteristics of Kashvi's abuser, Adam, but Kashvi was a victim of narcissistic abuse. Adam's character had a personality disorder that most people agree begins in early childhood. Oftentimes, when you hear the word "abuse", you immediately associate that with the person being physically assaulted. The reason I decided to shed light on this particular type of abuse in Part 1 of the book is because narcissistic abuse is becoming more and more prevalent in today's society.

You may have heard the term before but probably never paid much attention to it, or perhaps you've used the term to causally describe someone's behavior. Narcissism is defined as a grandiose sense of self-importance, a lack of empathy for others, the need for excessive admiration, and the belief that one is unique and deserving of special treatment. I think it is safe to assume that, at some point, some of us have been guilty of exhibiting a few of those traits. However, the differentiating factor is consistently exhibiting those types of behaviors, meaning that person is a highly narcissistic individual.

Narcissistic abuse comes in many forms, such as emotional, sexual, and financial exploitation of the victim. This type of abuse can go on for years without being noticed because it doesn't leave the same type of scars and evidence as physical

abuse. You cannot tell that someone is being emotionally abused simply by looking at them. It's not until that person comes to a place of healing and decides to share their story with others. Even then, it's difficult for the victims to truly open up and shed enlightenment because of the judgement that is often given. Sometimes the person isn't even aware themselves that they are being emotionally abused. Those who inflict the abuse have many different manipulative tactics that are used such as gaslighting, triangulation, social isolation, and verbal abuse just to name a few. Gaslighting is by far the most disturbing and diabolical form of manipulation. This is where the abuser will slowly try to disconnect you from yourself... from your reality. It is brainwashing that causes the victim to have increasing self-doubts, and eventually, lose their sense of perception, identity, and self-worth. In other words, they attempt to make you crazy by doubting your feelings and memory. You're probably wondering how someone in their right frame of mind gets involved with a narcissist. The fact is that these people do a wonderful job of hiding their true identity. It's also worth mentioning that the victims most likely do not have a strict set of boundaries. Someone with narcissistic personality disorder loves a person who doesn't have any boundaries because that gives them free rein to do any and everything to their victim. Narcissists usually go for people who don't have much self-love because they understand that person will do anything and accept anything for love.

In the beginning, the narcissists start off with something known as "love bombing." That is pretty much what it says—they will usually tell you that they love you after a few weeks,

they bring you gifts, and they usually tell you that they've never met anyone like you before. Let me clear it up before you misconstrue what I am saying. Is it impossible to catch feelings fast? No, it's not. Is it wrong for someone to shower you with gifts? Again, no, it's not. However, you have to understand that this is all a part of their wicked plan. In the love bomb phase, they deceive you into believing that they are such wonderful people that you would do anything to keep around. The purpose of this stage is to get you involved deeply with your emotions early on so that once the mask comes off, you don't have sense enough to use your logical mind. This is a perfect example of why it is imperative to TEST THE SPIRIT. 1 John 4:1 instructs us to test every spirit to see whether or not they are of God. This is where a lot of us fail because we make decisions based on our emotions, but our emotions are not always stable.

Narcissistic abuse has the power to hold its victims for prolonged periods of time because of their strategic manipulative tactics. There are many stages of this abuse, which makes it increasingly difficult for someone to leave or even recognize that they are being abused. In Kashvi's story, we learned how Adam was sweet in the beginning, but after a few months, he became both verbally and emotionally abusive. That is often called the "devaluation stage," which is where the person will flip the script and leave you completely baffled. This is also where the mask begins to fall and you slowly start to see the real person. The main purpose of the devaluation phase is to BREAK THEIR VICTIMS. They begin to criticize the target and belittle them every chance they get. They'll say things like, "My ex was much

better/nicer/smarter than you.” Or, “I can’t believe I am with someone like you, you’re lucky to have me in your life because no one else would ever want you.” The goal is to isolate the target from their support system (family, friends), then work to gain control over their mind. Once the narcissist has control over their target, they start to believe the lies and deception. They start to believe that they deserve the abuse. They start to believe that they actually need their abuser. We are going to break this thing down today because too many people suffer in silence because they are uninformed about this particular type of abuse. Throughout this wicked perpetual cycle of abuse, the narcissists will fluctuate back and forth between each phase in order to leave the victim in an absolute state of confusion.

Not many people will agree but that’s ok because I am not here to make you like me or agree with every word I say in this book. I was sent on an assignment to deliver some people because the enemy wants to continue to wreak havoc and prey on your ignorance. It is my opinion that narcissistic personality disorder is not just a mental diagnosis but a spirit. An evil spirit that entraps its victims in order to oppress them. We see a lot of the same traits and characteristics with the enemy wanting to control, manipulate, and isolate you. In the devaluation stage, the victim becomes so broken that they can no longer even recognize themselves. They become totally dependent on their abuser through a “trauma bond.” Their abuser has inflicted so much pain, so much mental and verbal abuse that they are essentially afraid to leave at this point. Some people often experience cognitive dissonance during this stage. Cognitive dissonance is defined as “The

state of having inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes, especially relating to behavioral decisions and changes in attitude.” In other words, the victim can't fully comprehend the totality of all the abuse that has been inflicted on them. They try to remember the person that they met in the beginning, but the truth of the matter is, that person never existed. It was a façade.

CONQUER AND DESTROY

The final stage in the cycle of narcissistic abuse is the “discard stage.” This is where their plan is fully put into motion and they plan to completely destroy the essence of who you are. All along, they knew who you were, they knew that you were carrying greatness. That’s why they chose you. Just like the enemy, narcissists DO NOT WASTE TIME ON ANYONE WHO DOES NOT HAVE VALUE. I don’t care what lies they told you in the beginning. Understand this very clearly. They pursued you with only one intention... TO CONQUER AND DESTROY. These people are the definition of evil, they never had intentions to love you. I mean, how could they love someone if they don’t even have love for themselves? We will talk more about how it was impossible for them to ever love you in just a few moments. No one who has genuine self-love will go out of their way to inflict pain/abuse in an effort to purposefully destroy another human being. That is why I said that this abuse is a demonic spirit because the narcissist’s main agenda is to destroy you. The enemy’s main agenda is to destroy you.

Now you can see how the abuse was strategic from the beginning. They want to put you on a pedestal only to later

be the reason that you come crashing down. If that ain't evil, tell me what is. In the discard stage, the abuser will usually abruptly disappear or break things off, leaving the victim without closure. They'll say things like, "My life was so much better before you came and ruined it." Or, "No one will ever believe such a pathological liar. You are crazy and need to seek mental help." What is really happening is the abuser is projecting everything about themselves onto the victim. The danger is that they have most likely become your only source of validation so you believe everything they say about you to be true. It's important to note that the narcissist will target your strengths and call them your weaknesses. This is also known as a "Smear campaign," where the goal is to ruin you and make you crawl into a fetal position feeling defeated... feeling hopeless as if you have lost your will to survive. We are breaking some chains today and shedding light on topics that unfortunately not many people are educated on.

The last stage of this abusive cycle is often called "hoovering." The victim has decided to embark on the journey of healing and recovery and they assume that the narcissist has moved on but that couldn't be further from the truth. This is a trick and the purpose is to re-engage with the victim and take them through the cycle again and again. The solution to surviving a hoover attempt is to simply break off all contact. CHANGE YOUR NUMBER, BLOCK THEM ON SOCIAL MEDIA, STOP VISITING THE PLACES WHERE YOU USED TO HANG OUT TOGETHER AND HEAL. Healing from this abuse is essential, otherwise, you will continue to attract the same type of individuals at different stages of your life. I would also like to remind you that you have the power to

break the cycle of abuse at any time. Once you realize that you deserve more and you are a child of the king and you refuse to be treated like the scum of the earth, you revoke the power of your abuser.

HEALING, FORGIVENESS, & SELF LOVE

Now that we know a little about narcissistic abuse, we have to talk about the healing process. This type of abuse is diabolical so you will not be able to heal without the help and intervention of the Holy Spirit. Understand that this was an attack on your soul, on your entire existence. But if you survived, you have to give God some praise. Right here, right now, don't read any further until you thank God. By the grace of God, you are alive, you have survived an attack that was designed to wipe you from the face of the earth. The enemy did not expect you to make it out alive, therefore, you are a miracle. Throughout this healing journey, you have to be intentional. You have to fight for your healing/deliverance because it will not be easy whatsoever. There will be moments where you question whether or not you made the right decision, or you start to wonder if they ever really loved you. Let me answer it for you. They never loved you. Not even a little. I'm going to prove it. We have to measure love not by the world's standard but by God's standard. 1

Corinthians 13:4-8, "Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud, it does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrong, love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth, it always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres, love never fails." Spend time in God's presence, spend time reading the word so that you can strengthen yourself. Learning to see yourself as God does is essential when rebuilding your self-worth. Whenever you find yourself ruminating over the past abuse, just ask yourself, "What does God say about me?" You are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14). You are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27). You are a masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10). You are chosen (Ephesians 1:4).

After someone has inflicted abuse, caused you emotional trauma, and/or taken advantage of you, the last thing on your mind is forgiveness. Right? Let's be honest here. Well, I'll be transparent and say that there were many moments in my life where I felt it was an insult for me to forgive someone for hurting me. I can think of many examples but I'll just name one for the sake of time. A couple of years ago, I rented an apartment with a "friend." I was initially going to get a one-bedroom apartment. However, I knew that person was going through a lot of personal issues with their living situation and had difficulties getting approved for an apartment due to their credit. So, I extended the offer to get a two-bedroom apartment and we agreed to split all the bills and utilities equally. Since my credit was pretty good, my name was on the lease, things went well for a few months

until I got a call from the leasing office. They informed me that I needed to pay \$1500 within a week or they would begin the eviction process. I was speechless because I found out my "friend" hadn't been paying their portion of the rent. Then, to top it off, once I confronted them about it, they assured me it would be taken care of. The next day while I was at work, they had taken the liberty to move their belongings out of the apartment without telling me. So, there I was stuck in a bind trying to pay for a two-bedroom apartment that I couldn't afford. Needless to say, I was hurt because friends just don't do that, or they shouldn't do that if they have a decent heart. It took me a while to accept that the person wouldn't make things right and didn't value our friendship the same as I did. For months, I was angry because I had extended my home to someone, put my name on the line, and as a result, what did I get? A slap in the face. I would see that person on social media bragging about the new things they had purchased and the luxury apartment they had. I felt disrespected, but I eventually had to forgive that person in order to move on with my life because they didn't care that I was angry. No, it wasn't fair, but forgiveness was for me. I deserved to move on and leave that situation in the past. Was forgiving that person easy? It sure wasn't. Will I ever allow that person back into my life? No, I won't, but it taught me a valuable lesson.

So, it may be easier said than done to forgive someone who deliberately hurt you or abused you in some way, but in order to move on, you have to walk in forgiveness, otherwise, your past will continue to have a grip on you. There's a song that comes to mind that says, "I want a heart

that forgives, one full of love, one with compassion just like yours above, one that overcomes evil with goodness and love, like it never happened, never holding a grudge.” It won’t be easy to forgive but God will walk you through it. You deserve to be free from the pain of your past.

Towards the end of Part 1 of the book, we saw that Kashvi wrote Adam a letter forgiving him for all of the pain, trauma, and mental abuse. Kashvi endured a lot but she understood that if she refused to forgive Adam, her past would continue to torment her mind. When someone chooses to walk in forgiveness, it is not intended for the other person. In essence, it is a declaration, which, in turn, breaks the stronghold. We also have to remember that God forgives us when we are not deserving. I can’t even think of how many times I’ve had to pray, asking God for forgiveness because I fell short in a particular situation. Prime example, when Christ was on the cross, he said, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” Imagine that, being convicted for a crime you didn’t commit, people spitting at you and insulting you, and in the midst of all that, forgiveness was on his mind. It really makes me grateful because I know there are things that I’ve done or said to hurt others whether intentionally or unintentionally.

SELF-LOVE

“I’m searching for a real love, someone to set my heart free, real love.” I’m sure many of you know that song! That’s the first thing that came to mind as I was writing this section. I embarked on a journey of self-love 11 months ago, and it has

truly been incredible. For the first time in my life, I have learned to really love myself. A person can easily say they love themselves but their actions, behaviors, and how they talk to themselves will say otherwise. We are being open and transparent here, and for years, I used to seek external validation because I didn't think I was good enough or pretty enough. What I've learned is that when you have a lack of love and respect for yourself, you ultimately attract that same energy into your life. Whatever you put out into the world is what comes back to you magnified... at a greater level. You have to show people how to treat you and they will only treat you in accordance with the standards you have already set in place for yourself. For example, the other day, I was watching a show on investigation discovery about a young female in her early 20s who was dating a guy who was physically abusive towards her. Her family and friends practically begged her to leave the guy but she decided to go live on social media basically saying that the guy loved her and that was how he showed love by hitting her. The devil lies. Unfortunately, the young girl was found dead a week after posting that video. That probably wasn't the best example, but we live in a society where we've become desensitized by those types of stories because people fail to enforce their standards and boundaries. Besides the love of God, self-love is probably the second-best form of love that a person can experience.

Once you begin to love yourself, I mean truly love yourself, you come to the realization that you do not need ANYONE to validate you. One of my favorite content creators always

says, "Validation is for parking!" This self-love journey has been so incredible because I am learning things about myself that I didn't know before and discovering more things that I enjoy. Self-love is a state of appreciation for oneself, learning to value yourself, as well as having a high regard for your own well-being and happiness. You are just as valuable as the next person... don't ever forget that. Every day, I wake up, look in the mirror, and tell myself, "Oh, girl, you are beautiful, black queen." That reminds me that I don't have to go out into the world looking for someone else to compliment me. There's an old quote that says, "When you leave home hungry, you go into the world starving." When a person chooses to operate in self-love, they exude a different type of energy. They become authentically comfortable with themselves, no longer waiting for others to give them permission to show up in the world. They understand that their world is a direct reflection of how they feel about themselves. If you are happy within, you tend to attract happiness. And once you've experienced the unconditional love of God, you no longer even entertain the thought of settling. I used to think I needed other people around to be happy but I have learned the secret to being my own happiness. Happiness is not a destination, it's not in another person, it's not in materialistic things... happiness is a state of being... a state of mind. Yes, don't get me wrong, those things can certainly bring one happiness, but until you've learned to be happy within, you will always find yourself searching to fill the void. Philippians 4:12-13, "I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation. Whether well fed or hungry, whether living in

plenty or in want, I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

So, just in case no one has ever told you, please allow me. YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL ENOUGH, SMART ENOUGH, GOOD ENOUGH, AND CAPABLE ENOUGH. YOU HAVE A PURPOSE. I want to remind you that you have absolutely no limits except the self-imposed ones in your mind. You are strong enough to overcome anything. God loves you beyond the depths of your mistakes, beyond the depths of your insecurities. God’s love is deeper than the depths of the ocean. Embrace it! You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you! That’s not just a scripture, that is the truth. I am living proof of that. You have an advantage over the enemy, so declare it right here. THIS IS THE LAST TIME I WILL EVER FEEL DEFEATED, HOPELESS, OR INADEQUATE! The Holy Spirit is your God-power on the earth, so activate it! CAGED BIRD, ARISE. ARISE AND FULFILL YOUR PURPOSE!

THE END