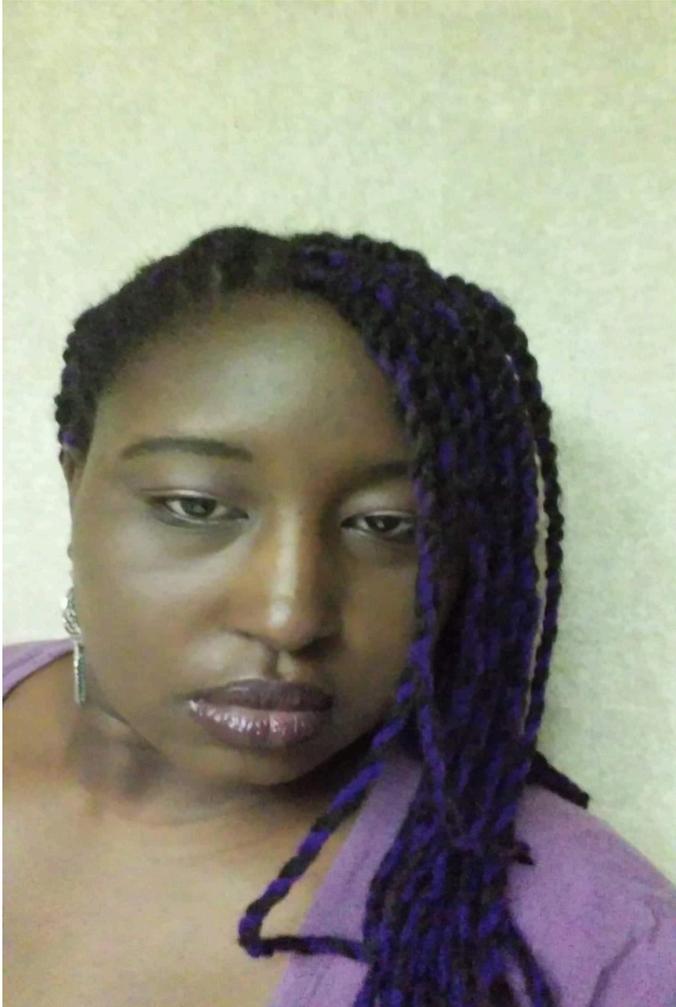


# I'm Still Standing Here



**By Candi Usher**

# Prologue

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This is a unique book about Cherise. It is told in the first person as she retells her life story to the reader. She highlights her decisions and how they affected her and others around her. She finds herself in situations where some critical choices are made for her, and where she has to figure out if her decisions will make her or break her. Despite the obstacles she faces in life, she keeps believing. Yet, she is caught up in bad choices and decisions. Can she be freed, or is she stuck for life?

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# Chapter One

Hello!! My name is Cherise. I'm 19, chocolate brown with the same color eyes, and I'm living a total lie right now. I have to go back to the beginning so you can understand what I mean. I lived a great life growing up. My parents were married, we lived in a nice house, and extended family wasn't too far away. I played sports growing up. I could be a girly girl, but being a tomboy was life. Outside was everything to me. I have an annoying little brother (we're 18 months apart). I love him, yet he's the

bane of my existence. Things were going well until my mom got sick. I didn't understand what was going on at first. I just knew she had to go away for some time to get better. The first time was when I was around 12 or 13. It was extremely rough. Things were said that hurt, and I never truly got over them. I didn't have anyone to talk to. I was starting high school, so it was another change added to my already going crazy life.

High school started, and I made some new friends and even had a few boyfriends. One in particular was a guy who had been

pursuing me since we were younger. He was a little older than me, but we finally got the chance to be together. It didn't last long because he eventually graduated. With my mom being sick, and feeling like I had no one to depend on because I had grown apart from so many people, I began to feel lonely. Out of the blue, I met this amazing guy. I thought the attention he began paying me was so cute. With my mom being sick and having to take on extra responsibility, I just wanted someone to pay me attention. He did.

It started with his cousin coming to hang out with me. She would approach me and strike up a conversation. Every day she would come to talk to me. We became quick friends. Then she began bringing me notes that they were from a secret admirer. Y'all remember how we used to fold notes, then write the to and from on the outside so they could be identified. I wrote little notes back and passed them to him through her. I couldn't believe I had someone who was crushing on me. I was 16, but I wanted a longer-lasting relationship. Yes, I know now that that was foolish at such a young age.

Yet, at that time, I wanted more comfort than anything with everything that was going on.

Anyways, back to this admirer. He was a great mystery to me. He said all the right things. He made me feel good just with his words. Then he began sending little bags of candy. That was the sweetest thing he could have done. I never had a man buy me anything other than my father. But my dad doesn't count because I'm forever a Daddy's girl. I'm a total sucker for a man who does just little important things for me. I felt so special and wondered when I would see my secret admirer. I wanted to know

what he looked like, what he saw in me, and why he picked me. I didn't know he saw my weakness, my need for attention that I should have waited on. I didn't know that his thoughts and plans were nowhere near what mine were.

One day, I finally got to see his face. His cousin had come up to me and asked me to follow her. Around the corner stood a 5'9" handsome guy. His skin was a beautiful pecan tan and he had a somewhat muscular build. I could not believe he was my secret admirer. We started a conversation and found we had so many more things in

common than what the notes said. I liked him so much. What I didn't know was that I wasn't the only girl he was giving notes to. As we began talking more and more, the more bad things I heard about him. I was told he already had a girlfriend. People told me they saw him with other girls. I didn't want to believe what I was hearing. There was no way he wanted anyone else but me. Because that's what HE told me. And I believed him.

I was a good girlfriend, and I should have been the only girl he wanted. I could change him. I knew I could. My love and

feelings for him would do the job. One day, my brother was jumped. I didn't do anything. I wanted to jump in and protect my brother, but I was scared I was going to get hurt too. I thought my boyfriend would defend my brother. But he didn't. He laughed at what was happening. I figured it may have been a fluke, not knowing that he was the reason my brother was jumped, and that's why he was laughing. I still thought I could get him to change. I would stick with him and show him what life could be like if he changed. I didn't realize I was letting him

change me, instead of exerting the  
“influence” I thought I had.

The next thing I knew, I found out that he was banned from the school. He wasn't even supposed to be on the property. I felt special that he would take a chance to see me even though he could get in trouble. My, how wrong I was. He would encourage me to skip school so I could come hang out with him. He was priming and prepping me for his next move. It was a setup, and I didn't even see the trap. I don't know how I passed 11th grade, but I did despite everything going on.



## Chapter Two

My family life was starting to go crazy again. My mom was sick. Her health issues were impacting the whole family. My dad was working constantly, and my mom had to go to a hospital again, this time for a longer time. I took on the responsibility of my chores and cooking. On top of that, I had homework. I wanted to get away from it all. I told my boyfriend about my problems, and he gave me comfort. He kept encouraging me to go beyond kissing him, promising that he could help me forget the problems. He

had been pushing and pushing for me to sleep with him. I would let him touch me more and more, not realizing the path I was running down. He broke my walls more and more. I trusted him so much that I gave him my one treasure. What I didn't know was that there was a bet on my virginity. I wish I knew then what I know now.

It was a special moment for me. It wasn't for him. He lied and said it was his first time too. The words that I know now were all lies. All that mattered to him was that he got in my pants. I was another girl he conquered. I was praying to God I

wasn't pregnant because I didn't want to end high school like that. Fortunately, I didn't get pregnant from that encounter. I found out later that he wanted my virginity because that was the only type of girl he had never slept with. Yep. Way to feel special.

I believed that giving him something so special would change him. Yet, he remained the same. I would dedicate a song to him on the radio and turn around, and another girl would dedicate one to him too. I figured it was another guy with the same name so I brushed it off. I thought I

was his only love. Yes, I'm aware of how naive I was. You try being a broken by that time 17-year-old. The only person who seemed to care about you was the very person who was hurting you. Yet, you would rather take that pain over the pain of a parent who told you to your face they no longer wanted you. That's the knife to the heart. When he offered me a way to get from home, I took it. I left home at 17. I thought I was leaving for the better, not knowing I was stepping into something so much worse.

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