



**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

### *Prologue*

Anniversary gifts come wrapped in many packages from the miniature box, containing a precious diamond necklace; to the medium-sized package, enclosing a sexy negligee. Or, it may come in the form of a husband, placing his hands over his wife's eyes, leading her to their front lawn, then, tadaaaaa! There, draped in broad, red ribbons with the largest gift bow ever, may be a brand-new, black Lexus or a BMW convertible.

But if anyone would've said my third wedding anniversary present would be wrapped in the finest beating ever, delivered with a 2x4 plank, by the man around whom my entire world revolved, I would've said it was a lie from the pit of hell.

It was a Sunday morning on June 26 during the early 1980s on the East Bank of the Demerara River, in the Republic of Guyana, South America. I was awakened to slender sunrays peeking through the peach-colored lace curtains of our ground-floor apartment which my husband, William, and I rented from my parents. I lay in bed inhaling the fresh scent of dew, mixed with the fragrances from the yellow daffodils, red roses, and tiny white forget-me-nots. My parents lived on the floor above us, and the scent from my mother's garden was always a welcomed awakening. I smiled, looking across at William, sleeping beside me. He lay on his stomach, slight snores intermittently escaping his nostrils.

Slipping out of bed, I tiptoed to the small room adjoining ours. Our two-year-old daughter, Kianna, slept peacefully in her crib. Opening the wardrobe, I grabbed the *Happy Anniversary* gift bag, then tried to crawl back into bed quietly.

"Ummm . . . morning, hon. Why you up so early?"



**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

“Happy anniversary, Will. Together for many more.” I held out the colorful gift bag, smiled broadly, then bent over, and kissed his full lips.

William heaved his sturdy 5-foot 5-inch chocolate frame to a sitting position, bracing his back against the wooden headboard. He cocked his head to one side, knitted his brows, and looked up at the calendar on the cream concrete wall.

“Shoot! Forgot,” he said, holding his head with both hands. “Sorry, Angie, but thanks.”

Some of the joy with which I awoke dwindled away.

I watched William remove the package from the gift bag and unfold the wrapping paper, revealing a fawn silk shirt with a matching tie.

“You know you didn’t have to do this. Was so tied up I forgot, but that’ll be the first thing on my agenda tomorrow morning.”

“Oh, no prob,” I replied, “but let me name my gift since you didn’t get it as yet.”

“Sure, but don’t be unreasonable now,” he said, smiling.

“You know I have no unreasonable bone in my body,” I replied, stroking his head, returning his smile.

“Still waiting to hear what you want?”

“Come to church with me today.”

“Angie, please! Please!” William adamantly shook his head. “Now *that* is unreasonable. You know I worked hard all week, and today’s my rest day.”



**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

“But Will, it’s only 7:30. You can rest until around 10:00, and we can leave home about 10:45 for 11:00 a.m. church,” I pleaded.

“Angie, naaah. I’m tired, and I’m spending this day in my bed.” He started going through some cassettes on the nightstand. I got up and looked out the bedroom window.

“Then I will not go,” I said, stifling a sigh. “I’ll spend the day home with you.”

William slid my favorite gospel tape into the stereo, and I quickly forgot about my denied request. Nothing lifts my spirit more than gospel music, and he knew it. My sister, Gloria, took Kianna to church, so we had a part of the day to ourselves. Among other things, we cooked together, and when our daughter returned, we had our lunch. After the meal, we relaxed in bed while listening to the cricket game.

Kianna eventually wanted to go to her grandparents. Scooping her up and collecting some of her toys, I noticed William got up from the bed, grabbed his towel, and headed for the shower.

*No, he’s just freshening up. He can’t be going out.*

By the time I got back, William was dressing. I was hurt. Maybe I shouldn’t have been because he spent most of the day with me, but I was.

*Can’t he stay home for a day without going out? It’s only 4:30; he ain’t even spent a full day home and is on his way out again.*

I said nothing. Grabbing a novel from my nightstand I tried reading but kept seeing the same line over and over.



**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

“Angie, press this pants fo’ me?” he asked.

I lay on my stomach, staring at the book and didn’t respond.

“You’re so easily angry when I got to go anywhere. You should know a woman’s place is in the home. Why you think I gave you a daughter? She will keep your company,” he said, pulling at my toes. My anger boiled, but still, I said nothing. I later heard and ignored every thud of the heavy iron against the creaky wooden iron board. Then he was ready to leave. He pulled at my toes again.

“Miserable, I’ll be back in a while.”

I didn’t answer. And yes, I was angry. It was our wedding anniversary. Not only did he not get me anything, but he had also forgotten our important date. Then, he refused to go to church with me—the only thing I asked of him that day.

William pulled at my toes yet again and gave me a playful slap on my butt. I glared at him.

“If you know what’s best for you, you will leave me alone,” I said through clenched teeth.

He then poked me with his fingers, sending a sharp pain through my side.

Suddenly, I sprang from the bed like a leopard

It was our wedding anniversary. Not only did he not get me anything, but he had also forgotten our important date. Then, he refused to go to church with me—the only thing I asked of him that day.

**If this is your constant experience, it is not okay! Have a discussion. Don’t wait for a next time.**



**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

with one last chance at catching its prey, charging after him. He dashed out of the bedroom with me in pursuit. Reaching the living room, he struggled to unlock the front door. Realizing he would be through it before I got to him, I instinctively picked up the first thing I saw—a crystal vase, a wedding present from my employer. I hurled it at him. The vase struck the door a fraction of a second after he ducked. *Oh, shoot! I could have hurt him seriously had the vase hit him. Hell! I told him to stop provoking me.* The flowers fell to the vinyl floor, and some sand got into William’s soft black hair, but most of it fell to the floor. Miraculously, the vase didn’t break.

William rushed at me and started slapping me in the face and head repeatedly with both hands. Wildly and angrily I lashed out at him, kicking and punching. My retaliation angered him even more, and he struck me about my body, face, and head. Tasting blood and feeling it run down my chin, I cried out. William came at me again. I couldn’t get away. I looked around; a glass picture frame stood on the china cabinet. It housed one of our wedding photos. Snatching it, I hurled it at his face. He dodged; the picture frame crashed into the concrete wall, shattering into many pieces. Stunned, William held his head, looked around to where the remnants of the picture frame lay, and then back at me.

“What! Oh, you playin’ bad! Then you goin’ take what bad girls get,” he shouted.

Our apartment’s back door carried a 2x4 plank measuring about six feet in length, used to secure the door firmly. William raced across the room to the kitchen door and yanked the plank from its iron holders. I tried getting out the front door, but I wasn’t quick



**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

enough. My husband began beating me with the plank. I couldn't get away from him. One blow landed across my stomach. My feet gave way, and I collapsed to the floor, unable to fight back. I screamed for my parents and siblings, but no one came to my rescue.

I lay there in a crumpled heap, groaning. That was when the beating stopped. William then simply leaned the bar in a corner and went into the bedroom. He emerged shortly afterward with his hair neatly combed and his clothes straightened. Looking at him, one would never believe what had happened.

William stepped over me on his way to the door. Shaking his left index finger and with a pleased-with-performance smile, he said, "Don't you ever play you fighting with me again. When you play bad, you take what bad girls get."

He left, slamming the door shut behind him.

I either passed out or fell asleep because the next thing I knew the house was completely dark.

For a moment, I was startled, but then the horrific scenes from the afternoon came rushing back.

I held on to a chair and like an old woman, painfully pulled myself up and struggled to get my balance. My head throbbed, I was dizzy, and my throat was parched. Licking my lips to moisten them, they felt heavy and painfully dry. The musical clock on the wall

Both eyes were swollen with a black and blue mark under the right one. The front of my shirt was stained with dried blood, probably from my now puffed lips and lacerated forehead—William could have killed me and no one would have known.

**Abusive situations should never be allowed to get this far. Seek help before it is too late.**



**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

chimed seven times, alerting me I had been out for roughly two hours. I fumbled in the dark to find the light switch, then limped to the bedroom. Glancing at the wardrobe mirror I saw my horrifying reflection. Both eyes were swollen with a black and blue mark under the right one. The front of my shirt was stained with dried blood, probably from my now puffed lips and lacerated forehead.

I sank onto my bed, crying, trying to figure out my next move. I was ashamed to go to my parents' home, looking like this. Then again, I shouted for them, and no one came to my rescue, so why should I go to them anyway? William could've killed me, and no one would have known.

In Guyana, family members seldom involve themselves in domestic disputes. They lived by the motto, "You make your bed hard, you lie on it hard." Although I knew that, I couldn't believe my family would hear me scream for them and not come to my rescue.

Kianna's bedtime approached quickly, and I knew someone would soon either call me to get her or bring her home. I had to get out before anyone saw me. With much effort, I took a shower which made me feel slightly better. Unable to bear the thought of anything close-fitting on my sore body, I wore a loose dress. Placing a broad-brimmed hat on my head and pulling it down right above my eyes, I left the apartment without even going upstairs to say goodbye to my daughter.

On my way out, I was sure of one thing—William would no longer be in my life. Hailing a taxi, I went to my friend, Miriam's. She had married three months earlier and





**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

lived in the city. Rawle, her husband, standing nearly seven-feet tall, dark, handsome, and sporting a beer belly, answered the door.

On entering the living room, Miriam took one look at me.

“Angie, no! Don’t tell me is William hit you! Tell me no!” Miriam said angrily, lifting my hat, holding my chin, and gently turning my face from side to side, examining my wounds. Before I had finished explaining to Miriam and Rawle what happened, Miriam excused herself. Five minutes later, she returned in jeans and a t-shirt with her hair pulled back in a pony tail. She meant to find William.

“Miriam, I know you annoyed, but where you think you goin’ find William this night?” her husband asked.

“Even if I got to sit at he door till he come home, I goin’ do it,” Miriam responded, shoes in hand.

“Come on, sit down and cool yo’ head. You can go to his work place first thing tomorrow mornin’. You might get more satisfaction from that,” Rawle said, smiling.

Taking her shoes, he gently led her to the sofa.

“He will make you mother say is the same thing they did tellin’ you. If I could only catch he now, I would strangle he,” she said, clenching her fists.

“I can’t understand why he got to be like that. Is only a coward beat up a woman,” Rawle added.





**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

“Angelique, if I had me way, I woulda never let you go back, but that is a decision fo’ you to make, not me,” Miriam said. She headed to her bedroom, returning with a jar of iodine. Swiftly brushing a tear from her eye, she applied the medication to my wounds.

\*\*\*\*\*

The following day, I felt as if I had been run over by an iron-wheeled donkey cart.

“You should go see the doctor,” Miriam started.

“I was thinkin’ so too.” Rawle chimed in.

“No, I’m good, and I will be even better by tomorrow, I’m sure,” I responded, at the same time getting up and excusing myself from the table. I knew if I went to the doctor, the police would be after William. I couldn’t have my daughter’s father locked up.

It was Monday, a workday. Telephoning my job, I said I felt sick and requested two days off. While Miriam and Rawle went to work, I rested at their home took painkillers, and placed ice packs on the swollen parts of my body. I missed my daughter terribly but didn’t want to explain anything to my family. After a while, I reluctantly picked up the phone.

My mother answered after the first ring, as if she were sitting there expecting my call.

“Angie? Where you? Wha’ happen? Since when you does go out and spend all night? I asked

I knew if I went to the doctor the police would be after William. I couldn’t have my daughter’s father locked up.

**Most victims think this way. Wouldn’t it be better to get help for the abuser than to die and leave your children?**



**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

William fo' you this morning, and he say you must be sleep at a friend. Since when you does do things like that?"

"Mom, I cannot explain right now. Is Kianna all right?"

"Yes, she okay, but she asking fo' you all the time. Angie, what happen? You and William had a fight?"

"Yeah, Mom, but I called to let you know I'm okay and to find out how Kianna doing. Kiss her for me. See you in a couple of days. Bye, Mom," I said, replacing the receiver before she had a chance to respond.

Two days later, still with some visible bruises, I made it back to my job at the lawyers' office. I was thankful nobody asked me anything, except Mr. Crumwell, my boss.

"Angelique," he started when I entered his office. "Your mother called here twice looking for you. I told her you called out. Is something wrong?"

"William and I had a fight, and I stayed with friends."

"I suspected something of the sort. Boy, that is disrespectful—your parents live right there. Why would he do such a thing? What are you doing about it?"

"I suspected something of the sort. Boy, that is disrespectful—your parents live right there. Why would he do such a thing?"

**Outsiders looking on at situations like these may be able to help save lives if action is taken.**

<https://abuseintervention.org/help/fragment-family/>



**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

“Not sure, but I’d like an extended lunch hour to go see my daughter,” I replied, hoping to dismiss his inquiry.

“Sure, go right ahead. I’ll be here for most of the afternoon anyway.”

I thanked him and walked away from his desk.

“Angie,” he called after me. “Let me know if there is anything I can do to help.”

*Maybe file my divorce.*

“Sure, thank you.”

*Gosh, all the others probably know too. And imagine, instead of William, it’s my mother searching for me. I’m not surprised.*

Lunch time couldn’t come quickly enough. I took a cab to my parents’ home.

Kianna was looking out the window. She saw me and shouted excitedly.

“Mommy! Mommy!” Then she disappeared. The door was unlocked. I pushed it open to find her eagerly running down the stairs. Two steps away, I extended my arms, and she jumped into them clinging to me. Fighting back tears, I squeezed her to my chest.

“Mommy, Mommy, I cry for you. Why you didn’t tell me you going out?” she asked, releasing her tight grip and pulling her upper body away, as if examining me. She touched the wound on my forehead.

“You fall down and hit yo’ head? Wha’ happen to yo’ eye?” she asked.

My mother appeared at the top of the stairs.



**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

“How you doing?” she asked quietly, worry in her voice. Then she stared at me. Hard.

“Look at you face with a lot of marks-o-violence. William lookin’ for me to get trouble fo’ he,” she remarked, irritably.

“I’m okay, Mom, I’ll be fine. How you been?” I said, forcing a smile.

“I was worried,” she said, sitting and signaling me to sit across from her.

“I ask William for you, and he said he ain’t know; that you probably at a friend house. I ask he why you would be at a friend house, and he said you and he had a little noise, and you left when he went out. I even call your workplace. If I didn’t hear you that day you call, I would’ve find Miriam ‘cause I know you had to be there. Wha’ really happen?” she asked.

I explained about that Sunday evening, adding that I left without saying anything because when I screamed for help, nobody came to my rescue.

“Well, we all right here and ain’t know or hear a thing,” Mom said, shaking her head from side to side. “And you very wrong; I not goin’ get in y’all story, but I wouldn’t hear you calling and not answer. But you know something, the Good Lord does work in mysterious ways, ‘cause if I did only hear, it woulda been a different ball game altogether. He think he bad, but the longest rope got an end.”

“Y’all want to fight my daddy?” Kianna’s voice interrupted us. She sat so still on my lap, I forgot she was there.

“No, Ki, no one wants to fight your daddy.” I laughed.



**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

“Oh,” she said, sliding off my lap and running to the window at the sound of an approaching siren.

“That child is something else. You can’t say or do nothing for her to hear or see. Don’t worry, she gettin’ big. She goin’ deal with her father,” my mother said.

“So true,” I responded.

We entered the kitchen and Mom fixed a plate for her and one for me.

“So Angie, wha’ you plan doin’ and when you comin’ back home?”

“Mom, I really don’t know,” I said, taking up a spoon of white rice with stir-fried eggplant. Mom separated her fried snapper into bite-sized pieces, then she looked up at me.

“Anyway, don’t make no rash decisions and I advising you, whatever you do, think ‘bout yo’ daughter. She is a sweet child. For them couple days you away, she talk ‘bout you all the time. Soon as she hear a knock on the door or the phone ring, she askin’ if is her mother.”

Kianna loved fish. She climbed into my lap and kept asking only for fish. After lunch, it was hard to leave her.

“You comin’ back soon after work, Mommy?” she asked.

“I will be back as soon as I can, hon.”

“What is soon as you can?”

“Don’t worry, and I’m gonna bring you some juicy star apples when I come back.”



**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

“Good. You know I like star apples.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Around 8:15 that night, we heard a knock on the door while Rawle, Miriam, and I watched *The Golden Girls*. Rawle answered the door, letting William in.

“I can’t believe you got the gall to show up here,” Miriam shouted, rolling her eyes and sucking her teeth.

“Miriam, Miriam, please, you can talk to him better ’n that,” Rawle said, walking over to her chair, patting her shoulders.

“Better ’n what? He ain’t even deserve talking to. He lucky Angie ain’t got an older brother.”

“What would an older brother do, Miriam?” William asked, smirking.

Miriam sprang from her seat and headed toward William, but Rawle was quick. He grabbed Miriam and led her back to the sofa.

“Miriam, it ain’t call fo’ all that. I will talk with William,” Rawle said, placing an arm around William’s shoulder and leading him outside.

“Angie, if I was you, I would not go back with William.”

“But where will I go, Miriam?”

“How you mean where you will go? I got my own apartment now—is not like when I used to live at Aunt Brenda. You could bring your daughter and stay right here.”



**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

“I can’t impose on you, Miriam. You and Rawle only just married.”

“Then go back at your mother house. I sure Miss Evelyn and Mr. Castor ain’t goin’ care.”

Before I could respond, Rawle and William re-entered the living room.

“Miriam,” William started, “I sorry to upset you, but Angelique is the one who caused it on herself. Look her right there, ask her who started it. She first threw the vase at me. I was only playin’ with her, and she got real mad.”

“Even if so, you got any marks from her? Look at you, clean like a whistle and look at her, from her face right down is marks-o-violence! You should be locked up!”

“Anyway, I here to take Angelique home. Angelique, get your things,” William said, dismissing Miriam.

I was ready within a few minutes.

“Thanks for everything, Rawle and Miriam. I will be in touch.” Without looking over at William, I headed out the door.

On our way home, William acted as if nothing happened. He never admitted he was

“. . . but Angelique is the one who caused it on herself. . . .”

**Abusers always point the blame back to the victim. . . . Don’t accept it. Seek help!**

On our way home, William acted as if nothing happened. He never admitted he was wrong; neither did he say he was sorry.

**Some abusers never apologize, while others always apologize but never take steps to change.**





**HOPE**  
PUBLISHERS

We Empower! You Overcome!

**FIONA HAREWOOD**  
Author | Life Coach | Speaker

wrong; neither did he say he was sorry. *Was it male ego? How could he be so cruel and refuse to admit his faults?*

“I will go for Kianna,” I said, getting out of the taxi.

“No, she all right. We have plenty making up to do, you’ll see her in the morning,” William said, placing his hand on my shoulder, trying to guide me in the direction of the entrance to our place.

“William, I miss her. Lemme go check on her. If she’s sleeping, I’ll leave her until tomorrow; if not, I’ll bring her home.”

“Fine, go ahead,” he said, irritation etched in his voice. He made his way to our apartment while I rang the doorbell to my parents’ home. Mom appeared at the doorway—sleepy, but not surprised.

“Kianna sleepin’. Why you don’t le’ her stay the night? I know you miss...”

“Mom, may I sleep here too?”

“Hmmm, sure. You know we got lots of space. You tell William you staying here tonight? He tell me he did goin’ to bring you home.”

“No, let him wait down there like the dragon. I suppose he knows better than to come knocking. If he had killed me on Sunday, he would be doing without me now.”

That was the beginning of my five weeks as a single woman again. Only this time around, I had a child. Most times it happens that way—you may leave as one, but return as two. I wouldn’t trade my daughter for the world, though.