

So Good

IT HURTS...

*the pain. the fight. the love.*



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*the pain. the fight. the love.*

*Na'Kisha Crawford, M.Ed.*

PATHWAY PUBLISHING  
RANCHO CUCAMONGA, CA

Pathway Publishing  
7201 Archibald Ave Suite 4-120  
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91701

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Cover & Interior Design: Irene Archer  
[www.book-cover-design.com](http://www.book-cover-design.com)

Edited by: Michael McIrvin  
[www.a-1writingandediting.writernetnetwork.com](http://www.a-1writingandediting.writernetnetwork.com)

Publisher’s Cataloging-in-Publication  
(Provided by Quality Books, Inc.)

Crawford, Na’Kisha.  
So Good It Hurts: The Pain. The Fight. The Love./  
Na’Kisha Crawford

p. cm.

LCCN 2008924194

ISBN-13: 978-0-9744769-1-9

ISBN-10: 0-9744769-1-9

1. Self-actualization (Psychology) 2. Man-woman  
relationships. 3. Love. I. Title.

BF637.S4C73 2008 158.1  
QBI08-600101

## *Dedication*

I dedicate this book to LaRon Jr. (LJ), Ndiah (Nd) and Samiyah. One day, you will understand this and it won't be a day too soon. Some things in life will cause you **pain**. Sometimes, those things are worth the **fight** but nothing in life matters without **love**.



# Contents

<b>PART ONE — PAIN</b> .....	<b>1</b>
CHAPTER ONE—Definition of a Man .....	3
<i>Real Talk 1</i> .....	9
CHAPTER TWO—Playing with Fire .....	11
<i>Real Talk 2</i> .....	15
CHAPTER THREE—Freakin’ and Creepin’ .....	17
<i>Real Talk 3</i> .....	26
CHAPTER FOUR—Love Don’t Live Here .....	27
<i>Real Talk 4</i> .....	33
CHAPTER FIVE—Closure Conversation .....	35
<i>Real Talk 5</i> .....	42
CHAPTER SIX—Pregnant by Who? .....	43
<i>Real Talk 6</i> .....	52
CHAPTER SEVEN—Making it Through .....	53
<i>Real Talk 7</i> .....	64
<b>PART TWO — FIGHT</b> .....	<b>67</b>
CHAPTER EIGHT—Prize or Not? .....	69
<i>Real Talk 8</i> .....	79
CHAPTER NINE—Baby Momma Drama .....	81
<i>Real Talk 9</i> .....	92
CHAPTER TEN—Resilient but Human .....	93
<i>Real Talk 10</i> .....	105
CHAPTER ELEVEN—Checklist .....	107
<i>Real Talk 11</i> .....	115
CHAPTER TWELVE—Why NOT Me? .....	117
<i>Real Talk 12</i> .....	123

<b>PART THREE – LOVE .....</b>	<b>125</b>
CHAPTER THIRTEEN—Music was My First Love . . . .	127
<i>Real Talk 13</i> .....	129
CHAPTER FOURTEEN—Get it Together.....	131
<i>Real Talk 14</i> .....	138
CHAPTER FIFTEEN—Have Enough to Give . . . . .	139
<i>Real Talk 15</i> .....	146
CHAPTER SIXTEEN—Forgive but Never Forget . . . . .	147
<i>Real Talk 16</i> .....	159
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN—You Don’t Know Me . . . . .	161
<i>Real Talk 17</i> .....	165
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN—In the Meantime . . . . .	167
<i>Real Talk 18</i> .....	173



## *Acknowledgements*

I would like to first thank my Heavenly Father for bringing my heart around to meet with my vision once again for the creation of this project. God is So Real.

To my husband, Mr. LaRon Hall, for opening up your heart to my life and everything that I am. I appreciate your love and support. Thank you for being strong enough to go through the pain, the fight and the love with me when all was said and done and for being open enough to share it. To my beautiful LJ and Nd, you took the most from me over these past few years but you have given me the most in return. I love you.

Mom and Dad, I love you both so much and I hope that I am a reflection of all that is good in both of you. Mom, Mrs. Glory Ann Williams, I lived much of my love experience through your eyes even when your heart wouldn't allow you to tell me. Dad, Mr. Albert Lee Crawford, I lived much of my love experience through your heart even when your eyes wouldn't allow you to tell me. Now, my eyes and my heart are sharing it with the world as I live it for myself.

To my family, my brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, cousins, niece and nephews; your struggle has been my fight. I want to acknowledge you all because I love you and I want love for each of you. Don't give up in the pain. Determine that you are reason enough to fight. Win in the love that you are all so deserving of.

And to my grandmother, Nora Mae Jones, I will always keep a piece of your love with me.

To a few of my girls/personal editors, those of you who took the time to read my book and provide me with your feedback before it was a hit, I was listening. Sherri Anderson, Tracy Brown, Sheree Hoggro, Elisha Jackson, Imetra “Candy” Joiner, Stephanie Rankins, Demetria Titus and Chana West, I thank you guys and I appreciate you and to my cousin Shawana Walker, thanks for your excitement at the halfway mark. To my best girlfriends, I love you guys. And to my sorors of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Eta Omega Chapter of San Jose State University and Six Degrees of Determination Spring 95, Oo-Oop! You are fantastic examples of womanhood.

To those of you that have believed in me over the years, the ones who I have motivated, I thank you. You are the reason I have remained inspired to give the world a piece of me. I appreciate the support of all of you who took part in the *Real Talk on Love N Relationships* project. Thanks for fueling the fire. To those young men and women that need my inspiration, I got you. Never give up in the pain or the fight because love is waiting on the other side.

To those of you who helped me bring another vision into reality, I thank you. This is my dream now watch it grow.

Lastly, I would like to give a special Thank You to Lynn Clemmons, Veronica Clinkscales, Tiffany Gilbert, Forrest D.L. Hightower, and Darlene Miles because you cared enough when times were the hardest...

*“This book describes both a struggle and an overcoming”*

—**IMETRA JOINER, 45, TEACHER**

*“A powerful display of resilience; Thought –provoking and reassuring with all of the struggles that the author goes through, still coming out on the other side maybe I can too.”*

—**CHANA D. WEST, 28**

**SR. CLINICAL MEASUREMENT ANALYST**

*“In a book about love and relationships, I’m looking for someone with experience to give me insight on what love really is, the ups and the downs and I strongly feel that this book does that.”*

—**STEPHANIE RANKINS, 25**

**FINANCIAL OPERATIONS ASSISTANT**

*“We all have things to endure and it’s sometimes so easy for people outside of the story to observe and judge. It’s so easy to do and this book is a reminder that each person has to make their own decision about who and why to love.”*

—**DEMETRIA TITUS, 32, ATTORNEY**

*“The dating world is exhausting and unfulfilling and although I do believe in true love, it may not be granted to everyone for various reasons. The one commonality however is that we all want hope and this book provides it.”*

—**SHEREE HOGGRO, 32, REAL ESTATE BROKER**

*Never allow someone to be your priority  
while allowing yourself to be their option.*

*—Author Unknown*

## *Introduction*

Relationship issues that arise between men and women have gotten many of us to a point of despair, and loneliness has led us to do things that we are not so proud of. Because I have been there on both counts, my hope is that, by honestly sharing my experiences, the misery some of you suffer might be soothed. I have been so disappointed in myself and in love that I wished someone was there to tell me that I wasn't the only one or that it would get better. That's right, dear reader: even smart and beautiful women like you experience drama in relationships, and this book will take your mind off of your own love struggle for a while and give you ideas for moving forward to a better you, with or without your current relationship. In few words, *So Good It Hurts* is the good, the bad, and the sometimes ugly truth about love and relationships.

This book provides the “real talk” necessary when we know what we need to do but just can't seem to muster up the courage to let him go. This book will touch on the sometimes embarrassing truths that hurt so bad that we inadvertently ask for more by prolonging the inevitable. We stay in relationships that are stagnant, with men who will not commit to us or with those who have no respect for us, but we are hopeful. We give to partners who only

take. We want to grow with people who aren't growing. Nothing in this book is new, and in fact I would guess that much of what you will read is but the echo of a voice from deep down inside you that has told you the same things. Likewise, you could ask any older woman or man about some of the challenges they have faced over the years in relationships, and you would hear many of the same stories you are about to read. However, the core values that have contributed to strong and lasting relationships in the past seem to have been forgotten by the younger generations, and so this book will serve as a reminder.

I remember feeling pain so deep that I didn't think I would be able to move forward. Deep inside, the source of that little voice I mentioned earlier, I was mature enough to know that I would get through it, but I felt like I couldn't at the time and my feelings were what mattered. I knew that both the love and the pain were real. I couldn't write them off as just part of being in my early twenties or because I wasn't in a committed relationship or marriage and so the feeling should not count. I couldn't ignore the feelings because he was in a relationship with other women as well as with me, and that really struck a nerve. I must admit, however, and I had to admit it even then, that much of that pain was self inflicted. In many instances, I allowed these situations to go forth. I wasn't strong enough. I wasn't good enough. I couldn't make him love me enough to give me what I wanted. These negative thoughts were all temporary though. I soon figured out that I wasn't strong enough because I didn't believe that I was strong, and I believed I wasn't

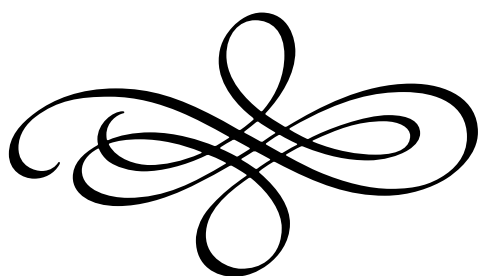
good enough because I didn't accept that I was better than the treatment I was allowing. It might be surprising to hear, but I always knew in my heart, the source of that voice again, that I was better, even stronger, and yet I couldn't keep bad relationship scenarios from becoming my reality. There are two people in a relationship, and it is important to keep in mind that other people's weaknesses or faults are not about you. Sometimes, he's just not the right man, or perhaps you are not the right woman. The failing relationship might just be bad timing for both of you. The important point to remember is that you have to get yourself right so that you are ready to take on your next worthy relationship with confidence and poise.

I have written about this topic, love and relationships, because I fear that as a society we are heading in the wrong direction when it comes to what is acceptable. I know that I may be a bit hopeful, even idealistic perhaps, to think that relationships can work out and are necessary for the majority of us to be happy, successful, and fulfilled in our lives. However, I believe that strong relationships are important for our children and important for us as adults. In order to really make a relationship work, we need to believe in and support the concept of a strong family base. That base begins with two healthy individuals, and although I have accepted that issues between these adults will create a little character and strength, relationships today need to be stronger and healthier. In fact, it seems that we are too quick to give up on anything even slightly challenging, and indeed we need to invest some time and effort in a relationship. However, often

times, we are dealing with people who are not healthy from the start, and instead of confronting issues, we try to build a relationship on top of the issues. Anything built on a weak foundation is likely to be short-lived and unhealthy. I am writing this book because I believe that God is love and that, through God, we too will each find love. We have to move past the temporary feelings and believe in, and hope for, love.



*Part One*  
*the Pain*



## CHAPTER ONE

### *Definition of a Man*

I never looked at him as a potential relationship partner before, even though he had been flirting and showing signs of interest in me for quite some time. One reason I had not considered him before was because he started at State a couple of years after I did, and therefore, I figured he was a little younger than I was. At the time, it wasn't so popular to date younger men, unless of course the woman was old enough to teach him a few things. Another reason that I had not considered him in this way was because I was waiting on something, or should I say that I was waiting on someone with whom a relationship worth my energy was never going to happen.

When I started college, I had a boyfriend from high school. My father told me that it wasn't a good idea to go to college with a boyfriend, especially one who was not also in college. I only knew that my high school sweetheart and I loved each other and he was there for me, and so I asked myself, "Why shouldn't we be together?" We had been involved nearly three years by the time I started State, but little did I know that my dad's prediction would come true. I soon ended my first sig-

nificant relationship, and as a seventeen year-old college freshman, I was sure that I knew all of the answers, especially about men.

I was still young and inexperienced, at least I knew that much, and so I wasn't looking for a husband yet, but I did want to broaden my horizons a bit, and I knew what I wanted in a man. Although my first boyfriend was a genuinely good guy with a few of the physical characteristics that I liked, I was more attracted to him because he was a good person and not necessarily because of how he looked. I stand 5' 7" and so I liked taller guys, at least 6'. I'll never forget a childhood friend of mine who said that she liked short guys so that they could look up to her, but as far as I was concerned, her rationale was all backward ("but hey, whatever floats your boat," I used to tell her).

At the time, I wanted men to look a certain way, dress a certain way, and act in a certain manner; but I have since learned that all I was doing was limiting my options. The more decisions I made about what this man should be like, the smaller the box I left for any man with whom I might have a relationship to exist in and the smaller the field became. I was not alone in this habit, however, far from it. Many women decrease the size of the box that their ideal mate could fit into, and then they wonder why they can't find him, why they are still alone. I was lucky. At a relatively early age, I figured out that limited thinking limits your options, and therefore, I had to make a few changes as to who my ideal man was going to be.

Of course, everything that I knew about what it means to be a woman, about men, and about relationships

## DEFINITION OF A MAN

stemmed from my exposure to my parents and my extended family; and trust me, we will talk about the impact they had on me later. I'm sure society had some influence on the type of guy I liked as well, as I found myself attracted to something of a "bad boy." After all, the cliché "good girls like bad boys" came from somewhere, and every cliché has some basis in truth or it would not have survived long enough to become a cliché.

I grew up in the 80s and 90s, and the popularity of the bad boy image was at an all-time high, which meant that there was something utterly attractive to me about a guy wearing a baseball cap, loose-fitting jeans, and tennis shoes — a tough guy. Why women have this thing about shoes, I don't know, but from a very young age, my man would have to have on a decent pair. Lots of women share in this ideal about men's shoes, and as strange as it sounds, shoes might be the only reason a man can walk on by without giving him a second look.

Back to the type of man that I wanted at seventeen: he needed to be cool, and I mean the term as in calm and collected, a desire I came by honestly because my father was "Mr. Cool." I tended to like a guy who was kind of cocky and smart, but he had to have some street smarts as well, and that's where the "bad boy" ideal came into play. A man who could not handle his own, stand up for himself *and me*, would not get a chance. If this brutal honesty about what I called a man at the time makes some of you uncomfortable, remember that I am sharing my experiences and my thoughts, however naïve they may have been, so that others might be able to identify their own limitations in their choice of an ideal partner.

At the time, I firmly adhered to this simple set of requirements, and I must admit that I knew lots of guys who fit into the category. There were quite a few other characteristics that they shared that were not so good. Many of them were “players,” or womanizers, for example. These guys had little respect for women, who were simply their prey, and they were more concerned about impressing their friends than they were with impressing women — they had no intention of being in a committed relationship. I mentioned that I grew up during the 80s and 90s, and if you are familiar with that time period, you may recognize it as a time when explicitly derogatory song lyrics about women were increasingly acceptable. Do I blame the music for the lack of respect that many of the young men were beginning to display? Of course not, but I do think the music had an impact, and it still does today.

I have to be honest and admit that I did recognize the signs a man was a player in most instances, but I made the same mistake many women make in thinking that I could change them. Most men change when they are ready to change. A man will not change just because you want him to, and in fact, he may decide not to change precisely because you want him to so desperately.

For the first couple of years following the end of my first significant relationship, I chose this same type of guy. He would meet my exterior expectations, but then there was a whole can of worms yet to open. I was so busy worrying about what I wanted my man to look and act like that I hadn't spent much time thinking about how he should treat me or what he should be like beyond super-

## DEFINITION OF A MAN

ficial appearances. I later realized that my high school boyfriend was a treat compared to what was out there, and for that, I really do hold him in high regard still today. I had not taken the time to analyze who I was so that I'd recognize what I wanted when it finally did come along. A few rotten apples had convinced me that I had better decide what qualities my ideal man should have, and I seized on the opportunity to come up with a mental image with little depth to it.

It would be nice if I could tell you that it was overnight I discovered entirely who I was and that led directly to the formation of my definition of a man. The truth is I'm still working on me, and as for my definition of a man, well that definition started back then and has been evolving since. It would be a few more years before I'd stop trying to make things happen on my timeline though. When your heart is in the right place and you are trusting in God's timing versus your own, life will be much easier for you. Many of us are under the misconception that, if we do all that we can to meet that certain man's needs, he will be there to meet ours. Unfortunately, this is just not so. We cannot make another person see something in us that they cannot see in themselves, or more importantly, that we don't see in ourselves.

If you are trying to find that person to share the rest of your life with, or even someone to grow with for now, the last thing you want to hear is what follows, but listen up! God is sometimes working on your heart, helping you to love you, before he allows another person in. I know someone has probably told you this before, and the

*So Good it Hurts*

person who said it was probably older or married, right? I know, such a thing is easy for them to say, but the truth is, someone who has been-there and done-that often does understand where you are and that there are no easy answers. When you are longing for someone to love and share your world with, you have to trust that God knows better than you do where you are and how much you can take. Once you make the decision to define your man, be sure that you have defined who YOU are AT THAT TIME (because your definition will indeed change).



## DEFINITION OF A MAN

### REAL TALK 1

**Girl, get this through your head! First and foremost, you CAN NOT change a man. He has to change for himself, and he will do that when and only when HE is ready. Most of us make the mistake of thinking that, if we just hang in there, he will come around and give us what we want. We might even think that he'll just begin to do the right thing one day when we least expect it, and this is where we are wrong. He usually keeps doing what we allow him to get away with and he will only change if and when he wants to.**