Introduction

The year was 1969 when I first walked into Corporate America-young, ambitious, and carrying the hopes of a family and a community that I believed I could climb higher than the world expected. I didn't know the rules, but I understood the stakes.

Nearly five decades later, I sit in a crowded auditorium watching my oldest grandson rise to receive his graduate degree in business. His future looks bright. He already has a job offer from a management consulting firm- an opportunity that was almost unimaginable for a young Black graduate in 1969.

As he crosses the stage, I feel pride, yes, but also something deeper- a quiet fear. I wonder what his journey will demand of him. What battles he will face. What ceiling he will crack. What rooms he will enter where he is the only one.

And as the applause fades, I am pulled backward, back to the beginning of my own climb. Back to my Boyhood. Back to the days when the world tried to tell me who I was allowed to be, while I was quietly deciding who I would become.

This is the story of that climb. The story of how a Black boy became a man inside white Corporate America. The story of how each stage---Boyhood, Knighthood, Kingdom, and Elderhood ---shaped not only my life, but the legacy my grandson now carries forward.

I tell this story now because the journey is not over. The battles may look different today, but the invisible walls and glass ceilings have not disappeared. My grandson's nine years in Corporate America—nine years in management consulting, with only two assignments where he was not the only Black professional in the room — remind me that the struggle continues, just in new forms and new spaces.

As I watched him step into his future, I whispered the same words I once told myself:

"See you at the top!"

Forward

There are some stories that don't just belong to the person who lived them—they belong to everyone who was shaped by them. My father's story is one of those. It is a story of a man who climbed mountains that were never meant to be climbed, broke through ceilings that were never meant to crack, and walked through walls that most people never even knew were there.

But for me, this story is personal.

I grew up watching my father move through the world with a quiet strength that didn't need to announce itself. He didn't talk about his struggles often, but you could feel the weight of what he carried–and the dignity with which he carried it. He was the kind of man who made you stand a little taller just by being in the room. The kind of man who made you believe that excellence wasn't optional; it was expected.

As a child, I didn't understand the full meaning of his journey. I just knew he was the one who showed up, who supported, who guided, who loved. But as I grew older–as I stepped into my own professional world, as I learned more about the history he lived through–I began to understand the magnitude of what my father accomplished.

He wasn't just climbing for himself. He was climbing for all of us.

For his daughter, Terri, whose light still shines in every memory we hold. For her son, who now walks the path she once dreamed for him. For me and for every young person in our family who grew up believing that "the top" was not a fantasy—it was a destination.

This book is more than a memoir. It is a blueprint. A testimony. A legacy.

It shows the four stages of manhood not as abstract ideas, but as lived experience—Boyhood shaped by identity, Knighthood forged in struggle, Kingdom built through service, and Elderhood defined by wisdom and purpose. It reveals the invisible walls my father faced, the glass ceilings he shattered, and the communities he lifted along the way.

But what moves me most is not the success he achieved–it is the intention behind it. My father built things that mattered. He saved lives. He opened doors. He created opportunities where none existed. He lived a life that made other lives better.

And he did it with humility.

As you read these pages, you will meet the man I have admired my entire life–not just the professional, not just the entrepreneur, not just the leader, but the father whose love shaped our family and whose legacy continues through every generation that follows.

This is his climb. This is his truth. This is his gift to us. And as he always

says–**See you at the top.**

–Brooke Alexandra

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