

GOTTA
Believe!

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Gotta Believe

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Chapter 1

“Clear!” Dr. Beverly Thomas said as she prepared to place the deliberator paddles over the young man’s chest for the second time.

She was starting to sweat and could feel herself growing tired. This was unusual for her, but this had turned out to be a very unusual day. She said a small prayer and felt her second wind coming on.

After administering the shock there was still no pulse. Beverly ordered an increase in the next dose of epinephrine as she and the team of doctors and nurses continued to perform CPR.

“Clear!” Beverly said again as she administered another shock. She was hoping to get his heart started again so that she could continue with his surgery.

This patient had been the third gunshot wound to come through the ER so far that night. She wondered what on earth was going on in the little town of Topeka on a Monday night. She had plans of her own, after all. She had suffered a loss of her own earlier that day and honestly did not know how she had made it through the first surgery she had done. She had just

finished up that surgery and was halfway home when her cell phone rang.

As she rumbled her manicured hand through her deep purple, Jimmy Choo, embossed, Rikki shoulder bag, she already knew it was one of two people calling her this late. *Where is my Bluetooth?* Beverly asked herself, hoping it was her good friend calling to see if she had made it home okay. She was also worried about him and his family, as well as her church family. They had just lost the best thing that ever happened to them. *How on earth are we going to carry on?* Beverly thought as the reality of the situation hit her again.

Beverly had missed the call, but it was not too long before her BlackBerry rang again. Just as the second ring was about to end she found it. Without looking at the caller ID, she answered.

“This is Dr. Thomas,” Beverly said, hoping it was not work calling.

“Hello Dr. Thomas, this is Sara calling from your after-hours service. You are needed back at the hospital. Dr. Langley needs you for a consult on another GSW. This time it is for a young male, 30 to 40 years of age. Entry was in the thigh, which hit the femoral artery.”

As Beverly listened to the information the young lady gave her, she had to wonder why Dr. DeVonte Langley always called her, especially late at night. She appreciated the business he was throwing her way, but she would not be mad at him if he spread the love around a little more often. She would call him in to consult with her when needed, but she always tried to be respectful of his time when she could. They were good friends as well, and he often would show his appreciation for all she did for their practice. She was the top moneymaker in the office. The purse was one of many things he had given her to say thanks for all you do.

“Do you know if I was first or last on the list?” Beverly asked, knowing full well what the answer was going to be.

“You were first, Dr. Thomas. He said he wanted the best,” Sara said, trying to soften the blow a little.

“Well, in that case I am on my way,” Beverly said, although she had already turned her deep chocolate 760Li Sedan around and was just about to pull into the parking lot designated for doctors only.

“Still no pulse,” the nurse said to Beverly, snapping her out of replaying her earlier conversation.

Beverly had been working on this gentleman for over an hour. She knew it was going to be a tough surgery, because the bullet had all but severed his femoral artery. She really did not want to give up on this young man, especially since he appeared to be not much younger than her, perhaps even the same age. Although he was covered with tattoos and had been shot multiple times, she always tried not to judge anyone. She looked at everyone as a soul that could be saved and had more living to do.

Many, simply because of her background, had misjudged Beverly herself. A lot of people looked at her and automatically thought she was uppity. She was often compared to the actress Malinda Williams from the movie *Soul Food*. The reason they probably favored each other so much was because they were first cousins. Beverly never told a soul about her famous cousin. She felt that would only cause more problems for her.

Beverly was drop dead gorgeous; her skin tone was the color of a slightly darker version of the outside of a coconut. She had the sharpest short haircut to include light bronze highlights this side of the Mississippi and southern etiquette that most women would pay to have. She graduated at the top of her class and was a highly sought after doctor once she completed her internships. Many men dreamed of having her on their arm and many women wished they could study from her book just to get half of the class she had.

But Beverly never thought of herself that way. She went through many challenges in dealing with low self-esteem. She had many struggles with her skin tone and her share of skin problems. It took many years of treatment to get to where she was today. It also did not help that Beverly came from money. Her father was a retired engineer from NASA and her mother

was a retired partner from her law firm. She had two older brothers who were already grown and out of the house by the time Beverly reached junior high school. Both of her brothers were successful in their own right, so that made it difficult growing up in Orlando, FL, and when Beverly went away to college she knew failure was not an option.

Being a doctor was not her first choice. She wanted to run a homeless shelter or be a community activist. She did not think about money and survival for herself. Actually, she had no clue just how much money her family really had. Name brand clothing and the finer things in life never appealed to Beverly. She only went along with it for the sake of her overbearing mother. Growing up, Beverly would see so many children that had less than she did and if she thought she could get away with it, she would give them the clothes off her back. She'd always had a giving heart and suffered many punishments for giving away things without checking with her mother first. As Beverly got older she continued to put herself last in order to help others. This allowed her to find herself in many bad situations, especially with men; she wanted to save them even if it meant destroying herself.

"Add another 10cc of epi," Beverly said, determined to save this young man.

"Clear!" Beverly said as she placed the paddles on the young man's chest.

He had three gunshot wounds and the one she was working on was the one that would take his life. He had lost so much blood and as quickly as Beverly could get the blood in him it was leaving his body. When Beverly surveyed the situation and saw all of the blood that was on her and the team working with her, she had to decide that there was nothing more she could do for him.

"I'm ready to call it," Beverly said, taking a step back and hating those five words while looking at the clock.

"Time of death, 0200 hours," Beverly said, hating those words even more and saying a small prayer like she always did

over her patients whose souls were no longer with us.

As Beverly carefully walked out of the operating room and headed to clean up, she felt tears well up in her hazel colored eyes. She knew she could not afford to lose it right there because no one would understand why she was so emotional. Although she felt awful for this young man, her tears were more personal. Her mind was on Mother Albright. That was the latest loss for her that was personal and hard for her to understand.

Death always made her think of everyone she had lost in her life that was close to her. There was not a day that went by that she did not think of the very first incident: the death of her best friend, Tangela Romans. They were thick as thieves and she was the only little girl her mother allowed her to spend the night away from home with.

When you saw one you saw the other. They both had two older brothers and not any sisters. This was one of the many things they had in common. They went to elementary, junior high and high school together. They even had a pact to attend college together. During their senior year of high school they were preparing to go on the big senior trip in Miami, FL. Beverly's parent agreed to drive her down since she could not leave with the rest of her classmates due to a funeral they had to attend. One of Beverly's mother's partners in the firm had lost their mother and they had to go as a family to the services, which was in West Palm Beach, FL.

When Beverly arrived to check in at The Palms hotel there was a note waiting on her. The note indicated her friend, who was more like a sister, had been hospitalized. Tangela always had problems with her asthma and it had really just become second nature for her to get sick enough to be hospitalized for a few days and then she would come home. Apparently while swimming at the beach she saw something in the water that startled her. By the time Tangela made back to shore she was having an asthma attack. They could not figure out how she made out of the water. She was taken by ambulance to the local hospital there.

“Mom, we have to go to the hospital now. I don’t want to go to the beach,” Beverly remembered telling her mother.

The trip would not mean as much without her partner in crime. Beverly’s parents had agreed to take her to the hospital. Once there it was obvious this time would be different. Beverly had never seen Tangela look so bad and have so many machines hooked up to her. Her entire body looked three times the size she really was and she had tape over her eyes. While Beverly stood over her friend in complete shock trying to find the words to say to Tangela, her mother was talking to the nurses.

Tangela’s parents were on their way and had given permission for the team of medical staff to speak freely to Beverly’s mother in their absence. When her mother returned to the cool room, Beverly could tell it was bad based on her mother’s lack of response. She did her best not to talk too loudly as if Tangela was maybe able to hear what they were saying.

“How long does she have to be here? Can we take her home to a closer hospital?” Beverly asked her mother in a low voice while the quiet tears fell from her eyes.

“Baby, we just need to pray. She is going to be here for a while. They had to work on her for a very long time to get her heart started again,” Beverly’s mother said, not wanting to tell her daughter the complete truth.

When Tangela’s parents arrived, and after being at the hospital for 10 hours, they made the hard decision to take their only daughter off life support. Tangela had been declared brain dead and they were only keeping her going until her family could get there to say goodbye. That was the moment Beverly decided to go into medicine in honor of her best friend whom, she would never laugh or cry with again.