



Whitney Houston Tells All

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With more than 140 million albums sold worldwide, icon Whitney Houston is the most awarded woman in music history. Her powerful presence filled the screen in *The Bodyguard*, which made more than \$400 million worldwide. The film's soundtrack

remains the best-selling of all time. But behind her megastar success, Whitney hid the intense personal pain of her tumultuous 14-year marriage to R&B star Bobby Brown and a battle with drug abuse.

Whitney retreated from the spotlight after a controversial 2002 interview with Diane Sawyer.

In 2003, she faced more media attention after calling 911 to report that her husband hit her. The police report said Whitney had a bruised cheek and a cut inside her upper lip. Still, she refused to press charges. He was not convicted and has publicly denied ever hitting her.

The couple went public once again in 2005 on Bravo's reality show *Being Bobby Brown*.

Whitney has stayed silent about it all—until now. Back with her first album in seven years, *I Look to You*, she's sitting down with Oprah and opening up like never before about her past, present and bright future.

Oprah: The very first time I had you on my show, however many years ago, I thought, "You are 'the voice.'" ... There was a time, I read, where you were actually thinking in this past seven years—because you haven't done an album since 2002—that you were thinking of, I read, going to an island and having a fruit stand?

Whitney: Yeah. ... Growing organic fruit with my daughter on a little island on the beach and everything, living the simple life. You have to understand, I have been all around the world ... and I'd done it all at that point in time, or I thought. However, I wasn't remembering the gift that God had given me. I had totally put all that aside. And my daughter was growing up before my eyes, and I just wanted to grab hold of that. ...

At that time in my life, I was going through such trauma. ... I thought that was enough for me. I had the money. I had the cars. I had the house. Had the husband. Had the kid. And none of it was really that fulfilling. For a time, I was happy. I was happy, but I needed that joy. I needed my joy back. I needed that peace that passes all understanding.

Oprah: There's a wonderful quote by the *L.A. Times*. They said, "The pain, and frankly, disgust that so many pop fans felt during Houston's decline was caused not so much by her personal distress as by her seemingly careless treatment of the national treasure that happened to reside within her." ... You were not like any of the others. You really were given the voice. You were given that treasure. And people felt, how could you not know that *that*

was to be treasured?

Whitney: I knew in the days when I was a teenager singing for God. I was so sure. When I became "Whitney Houston" and all this other stuff that happened, my life became the world's. My privacy. My business. Who I was with. Who I married. And I was, like, that's not fair. I wanted to go to the park. I wanted to walk down the street with my husband, hand in hand, without somebody looking at us or having the media always in my business. ... I just wanted to be normal.

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Oprah: It's so interesting that you would say that because for years I have thought that, in many ways, the Whitney Houston that we have seen has been a creation of the media. That obviously your voice and your talent is what it is. But the gowns, the hair, that first video, all of that stuff was a creation.

Whitney: Yes. ... I love to get dressed up and I love to do makeup and hair and stuff, but that was my performance. That was my entertainment.

Oprah: And then when you were expected to be that all the time?

Whitney: That was too much. ... Too much to try to live up to. Too much to try to be, you know? And I wanted out at some point.

Oprah: Was marrying Bobby a way to be out?

Whitney: [Nods.] In a sense, because he allowed me to be me. He was fun. Passionate. Loving. It was crazy. We were crazy love.

...

Oprah: But there were so many people who felt because the image had been painted. There you are in the gowns and the this and the red carpet. ... Was that strategic on your part?

Whitney: The princess marries the bad boy. ... It really wasn't. I was at the Soul Train awards show. He came on the stage singing *My Prerogative*. He was fly. He could move, man.

Oprah: Were you first interested in him or he interested in you?

Whitney: He was interested in me.

Oprah: Really. What did he say?

Whitney: Bobby was more like: "Hey, check this out, I want to ask you something, you know? If I was to ask you to go out with me, would you say yeah?" I said: "Yeah, I would. I certainly would." And then from that moment on, we clicked. We were friends. Three years we went out before we got married. Three years we dated. Jet-setted all over the world doing what we wanted to do.

Oprah: And the fact that everybody thought, "What is the princess doing with this guy?"

Whitney: They don't have any idea about that sweet, gentle tenderness about him that nobody knew. He was a very quiet person. When that entertainer came out onstage, he did that thing. But at home, he was very much the father. He was very much the man. He was very much in control. I liked that because I was in control of all my stuff, and here he comes along and everybody was like, "Wow, she's got somebody now." When he said something, I listened. I was very interested in having someone have that control over me. It was refreshing.

Oprah: It was refreshing because in every other aspect of your life—

Whitney: I was in control.

...

Oprah: Well, one of the things that I recall in an interview that you did with Diane Sawyer in 2002, the world was shocked when she asked you about addiction and you said if there was an addiction, it was an addiction to making love.

Whitney: Yes. We did a lot of that. Lots.

Oprah: When did it start to go wrong? Can there be too much passion?

Whitney: Yeah, it can clash. ... After *The Bodyguard*. 1993, 1994, 1995 were filled with *The Bodyguard* years. That album lasted me. It went for a long ways. I was on a whirlwind by that point in time. I was going everywhere. That record was so huge. So I had my baby.

I had my baby in my hands, and I had the man of my life that I loved so very much who I was crazy for with me. And he had just put everything aside of his own, and just said: "I'll go with you. Don't worry about it. Go do this thing." I think somewhere inside something happens to a man when a woman has that much control or has that much fame. ... If he doesn't have his own.

Oprah: Was he jealous of you?

Whitney: He's not going to like this, but yes.

Oprah: Then did you try to overcompensate?

Whitney: I tried to play down all the time. I did. I tried to play: "I'm Mrs. Brown, everybody. Don't call me Ms. Houston."

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Oprah: You started to dim your own light?

Whitney: Yep. Sure did.

Oprah: Do you still worry about pleasing him?

Whitney: No. Not at all. There's things I could say. I won't. Trust me, there's some things I really could say that he would really be mad about.

He never liked the fact that people would say: "You're jealous of her. You're just jealous of her fame and her fortune and what she has" and everything, and he would get really pissed off. But it's not abnormal for a man to feel that way. Or to feel that he was lacking.

Oprah: Was that why you agreed to do [reality show] *Being Bobby Brown*?

Whitney: Yes, I did. I just wanted people to know that I was his wife.

Oprah: Did you realize what you were getting yourself into when you signed up for that?

Whitney: I did not. ... I knew when I signed my prenuptial, though. I knew what I was doing there. But, however, no, I didn't know. I was in love. I was crazy in love. It didn't matter to me.

Oprah: Did he come to you and say, "I'm going to be doing this show, and they're going to be putting cameras in our house"?

Whitney: Oh no, I didn't know. I really didn't know. Because to me, it was just like, "OK, I'm your wife. What do you want me to do?"

Oprah: Did you all watch the show?

Whitney: Sure.

Oprah: And what did you think?

Whitney: I didn't know quite what to think. I knew I was trying to be Mrs. Bobby Brown. That's what I was trying to do without overshadowing the whole situation, which was difficult.

Oprah: So you did that for him?

Whitney: Yeah, I did. I did it for him. I did it with him. How could you not do a reality show, and I'm your wife, and not have me in it?

Oprah: There were many critics of it, and I think one of them called it a train wreck. Do you think it highlighted the dysfunction between you?

Whitney: Yeah, I do. I sure do.

Oprah: A lot of people, I think, after seeing you on that show, started to really worry about you and what was really going on with you. What was going on with you at that time?

Whitney: There were a few things.

Oprah: Were you happy?

Whitney: No. ... I wasn't happy with the marriage. ... I was losing me into that by trying to be pleasing.

Oprah: Were you also trying to—because the world had said it wouldn't last six minutes—were you also trying to prove the world wrong?

Whitney: I was determined to prove them wrong. So determined. And after awhile, you start to lose what the real concept is of the love. And you want to make a statement.

I was trying to make a statement. Like: "You guys aren't gonna win. You're not going to do that. We got married. We were in love. We were crazy for each other. We're wanted to have a family. I'm just not going to let you do that to us. I'm just not." And so was he. He was determined. We *fought* for that. And then somehow it got really kind of messy and got lost up in there. And then we started doing other things that entered into the marriage that you just can't come out straight when you've got a lot of outside stuff going on.

Oprah: When did the drugs start?

Whitney: Before *The Bodyguard* it was very light. After *The Bodyguard*, I had Krissy, it started getting heavy.

Oprah: What was your drug of choice?

Whitney: Cocaine. And marijuana. That's it. But he liked to drink. I wasn't a drinker. The alcoholism, that's an ugly thing. Either you're going to be a really nice alcoholic or a really mean one. He was really mean.

Oprah: His personality would become altered when he drank?

Whitney: Oh, dramatically.

Oprah: Was he violent?

Whitney: He was afraid to do things with me because my family was very, very, like: "Okay, boy. Remember. We told you once." So it was like he would walk kind of away from it, but me, I would become a little girl. I would become this little girl, like, wouldn't say anything. ...

Emotionally, he was abusive. Physically, no way. Because first of all, I was raised with two boys, and I will fight you back. I will fight you back with anything I can find.

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Oprah: So, he never touched you.

Whitney: No.

Oprah: Never laid his hands on you.

Whitney: He slapped me once, but he got hit over the head three times.

Oprah: By you?

Whitney: Yeah. Because I was, like, "Okay, you're going too far."

Oprah: What's the worst thing he ever said to you that you can share?

Whitney: I just remember this moment. It was his birthday, and I gave him a party at a club in Atlanta, Buckhead. He drank a lot that night. He drank a lot. And for some reason, everything that I did I tried to do to make him happy—it would turn on me. It was weird. Today, I understand it because people that alcoholics love, they try to abuse.

So when we got back to the house—he's going to hate that I say this—but he spit on me. And my daughter was coming down the stairs, and she saw it. That was pretty intense. Because I didn't grow up with that, and I didn't understand why that occurred. But he had such a hate in his eyes for me.

Because I loved him so much. He cursed me all the way home in front of his parents, and then he *spit* on me.

Oprah: How did you feel?

Whitney: I was horrified. He *spit* on me, in my face.

Oprah: Was that a turning point for you, or did you wake up the next morning and push that down or place that someplace in your psyche?

Whitney: I was very hurt. Very angry. And I knew somebody, somewhere, something was going to blow. I called a friend. I said, "Come get me now because it's at a turning point now," and I was almost two feet out the door at that point in time. I was ready to go.

And I asked [my friend] to come get me, and [Bobby] pushed me against the wall ... I was on the phone and I went back in and I took the phone and I hit him over the head with it. He just fell out on the floor. It was just drama. My daughter came down the stairs. She's, like, "Daddy?"

Oprah: Blood?

Whitney: Yeah. "Mom, what did you—," [her daughter asked]. I said, "I told him not to do it." I kept saying, "I told him not to do this. I told him not to do this." It was just one of those moments. It was just hateful. Ugly.

Oprah: So we were talking about how [you did] light drugs before *The Bodyguard* and then after *Bodyguard*—

Whitney: Oh, got heavy. Because I knew then we were trying to hide pain. ...

Oprah: Because *The Bodyguard* which, to the world, was one of the biggest moments ever in the history of CDs, albums and catapulted you to a level of stardom—

Whitney: Right. And remember, I did *Waiting to Exhale* after that, and then that album was huge.

Oprah: And *The Preacher's Wife* after that.

Whitney: And *Preacher's Wife*. By *The Preacher's Wife*, [doing drugs] was an everyday thing. ... I would do my work, but after I did my work, for a whole year or two, it was everyday. ... I wasn't happy by that point in time. I was losing myself. My mom came and got me twice and she would talk to me, and it was like, "Okay, we don't know what's going on, but something's going on."

Oprah: Were you in denial about it?

Whitney: Not really. I just wouldn't talk.

Oprah: When did you know that that marriage was not gonna work?

Whitney: I just knew. I was like, "You don't smell right. You don't look right. Something's going on." And then all this other stuff started coming out about him being with this one or that one or being too promiscuous. Dragging dirt into my home.

Oprah: Did that hurt you? Were you offended by it?

Whitney: It disturbed me. I was disturbed.

Oprah: Did you believe it?

Whitney: Yeah. Because I checked. I didn't look for it, but I checked.

Oprah: So the fact that he would be out with other women and would bring that into your home—

Whitney: Yeah, with my credit card? Absolutely. I had a problem with that.

Oprah: So you knew it was over, but you were still defending against it.

Whitney: Yeah, but I started moving furniture out of the house. I was little by little starting to take pieces of myself out of the home. And I even asked him to leave. And he said, "No, you leave." I said, "It's my house." ... And that was the time where he slapped me. But he was on probation for traffic violations. And he'd forgotten.

Oprah: Forgotten that he can't slap somebody.

Whitney: Yeah, you can't slap somebody when you're on probation. You're in violation then. So it went to domestic violence court, and I just could not see me putting him in jail.

Oprah: So were you always appearing and making those court appearances because you felt you had to stand by your man?

Whitney: I had to. Yeah, I'm his wife.

Oprah: You know what I get now that I didn't get then as just an observer in the world? ... What I now get is that you took those vows seriously.

Whitney: Very, Oprah. To my heart.

Bobby Brown was not convicted and has publicly denied ever hitting Whitney Houston.

Oprah: Tell me how bad did it get, the drugs?

Whitney: When you don't speak and you live in the same home and you're sitting right next to that person and you're not saying a word for a week? You're just sitting there? And you're just watching TV? That's bad. ...

Oprah: You're just watching TV and doing coke? Or are you smoking?

Whitney: We were lacing our marijuana with base. We weren't on crack. We weren't on no crack stuff. We weren't buying \$20 jumbos. We were paying money. We were buying kilos and ounces and ounces. We would have our stash.

Oprah: But you were freebasing cocaine.

Whitney: Basically. ... We weren't doing pipe smoking. We didn't get that far.

Oprah: Did the drugs give you any sense of relief?

Whitney: At times. Don't forget, there were some times we'd laugh our tails off. We had a ball. Sometimes you do have a good time. But when it gets to the point where you're sitting in your home and you're just trying to cover what you don't want people to know. It's painful. And then you want more just so that you don't let anybody see you cry. Or anybody to see we're not happy. ...

Oprah: And so you thought that your life as Whitney Houston, as we know her, was done?

Whitney: I wasn't even *thinking* about that. I had so much money and so much access to what I wanted and everybody was [asking] me "What do you want? What do you need?" I didn't think about the singing part anymore.

Oprah: You didn't miss it?

Whitney: No.

Oprah: You said you realized that the marriage was going to be over. Did you then make a decision that "I'm gonna get myself out"?

Whitney: Yeah. I remember saying to God one day, I said, "Give me one day of strength."

Because I was weak. I was so weak to [Bobby]. I was so weak to the love. I was, like: "This is love? What is this? What am I into?"

Oprah: Were you weak to him or were you weak to the drugs? Because the world's perception is you were weak to the drugs.

Whitney: He was my drug. I didn't do anything without him. I wasn't getting high by myself. It was me and him together. You know, we were partners. And that's what my high was. Him. He and I being together. And whatever we did, we did together. No matter what, we did it together.

Oprah: Because you were his wife.

Whitney: Yes. And he was my husband. And I'm gonna make this happen and we're gonna make this work. And that's the way it was.

...

Oprah: Were there days where you were drugged and didn't know what was going on? Because remember there was a time, I can't remember what year it was, that your sister-in-law sold pictures of your bathroom to the tabloids

Whitney: I wasn't there then

Oprah: And she said that there were days that you would lock yourself in a room and you would stay there and you would not speak to people for days. Is any of that true?

Whitney: Sure.

Oprah: Would you just sit in your room and do drugs?

Whitney: Yeah. Talk on the phone. Watch TV. Listen to gospel. I would still read my Bible, amazingly enough. I would still read my Bible. I still had it in me. I knew God was there. I knew the light was there and I was just trying to get back to it. I just kept trying to get back to that spirituality.

Oprah: Did you think something was gonna happen in those drug-crazed, drug-filled days where you're sitting for hours and days?

Whitney: There were times when he would smash things, break things in the home. Glass. We had a big, big giant portrait of me and him and my child. He cut my head off the picture. Stuff like that. And I thought, "This is really strange." So I figured, cutting my head off a picture, that was a little much for me. That was one sign.

And then there were other things like he started to paint in my bedroom eyes. Just eyes. Evil eyes that were looking at every point of the room.

Oprah: He started to paint on the walls?

Whitney: Yeah. The rugs. The walls. The closet doors. If I opened the door, there would be one picture. Then I'd close them and there would be another picture and eyes and faces. It was really strange. ...

Oprah: What are you doing with all of that?

Whitney: I'm looking at it going, "Lord, what's really going on here?" I was getting scared because I felt something was going to blow. Something was going to give.

Oprah: How long were you in rehab?

Whitney: I did my stint. You do your 30 days. I went to one where I could take my child with me. Everywhere I just had to have her with me. I wanted her to understand. I didn't lie to her. I couldn't.

Oprah: Really. Did you explain to her about the drugs?

Whitney: Yes.

Oprah: What did you say? How do you tell your child?

Whitney: I kind of associated it with our lifestyle. Our lifestyle. And what could happen.

Whitney: I got out of that program and it continued. The drugs didn't stop. So one day my mother came to my house. It's kind of funny. But now looking back at it, I see the love and the passion that my mother had for me, that she *has* for me.

She walks in with the sheriff and she says: "I have a court injunction here. You do it my way or we're not going to do this at all. You're going to go on TV, and you're going to retire. And say you're going to give this up because it's not worth it."

Oprah: Your mama came to your house with the sheriff?

Whitney: She said, "It's not worth it." She said: "If you move, Bobby, [the sheriff will] take you down. Don't you make one move." And he stood there like he was scared.

And she said: "Let's go. Let's do this. I'm not losing you to the world. I'm not losing you to Satan. I'm not doing this. I want my daughter back. I want you back. I want to see that glow in your eyes. That light in your eyes. I want to see the child I raised. And you weren't raised like this. And I'm not having it. So you make a choice, and you make it here today because I have a court injunction that says you have to go." ...

Oprah: Was your mother saying you have to go to rehab, or was your mother saying you have to get out of this marriage?

Whitney: You have to go to rehab and make a decision with a clear mind.

Whitney: I just knew I had to get to the point where I had to make a choice [about my marriage]. I just remember praying, "If you give me one day of strength, I will go out that door and I will *not* look back." And that one day came. And I left. I remember I said, "I'm going out for some sugar and some milk and I'll be back."

Oprah: Did you know that was the day?

Whitney: I knew it. I never came back. And I went to L.A. ... The furniture started leaving, I started selling the house, put the house on the market, cars, everything. I just got rid of everything.

Oprah: After or before then?

Whitney: After. After I left, and I was at a friend's house. He would not come and bother me if I was at a certain person's house, a friend of mine's, he would not come there. Because she was like: "If you come over here, I'm just going to shoot you. Just don't bother her. Leave her alone. She's got to make some choices in her life."

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Oprah: So about what year was this?

Whitney: Around 2006. I just got on a plane. I had two pairs of pants, some sneakers, probably a couple pairs of underwear, put it in my little doggie bag, a friend of mine got on the plane with me.

Oprah: Was part of the decision what you wanted versus what the public perceived?

Whitney: At that point, I didn't care.

Oprah: You were no longer trying to fight for the image of the public?

Whitney: I wasn't. Because I wasn't going to be in an unholy matrimony. I wasn't going to be living with a man who decided that he didn't want to live the same way I did or thought about marriage or me the same way. Being loyal. Being dedicated. Being true. Being faithful. All those things. I wasn't going to live with someone like that. I wasn't.

And he was doing all the opposite. And I wanted to stop at that point. I mean, the drugs, the whole thing. I wanted it all just to stop. And he just wanted to continue. By that time, the evil, the enemy just wanted to let itself in and take over, and I wanted it out. And I was praying hard. I was praying very hard. And my mother, being the warrior that she is, she stepped in and said, "Let it go. Let it go. Just let it go."

Oprah: What had she been saying all this time? Did she realize how tumultuous this

relationship was? Or were you putting up the facade with her too?

Whitney: I can't play her. ... Cissy comes in and she goes: "I don't care what you say. I know my child. I'm looking in your eyes, and I know you're not happy. And if you don't get out of this, something is going to happen. I'm not giving you up."

Oprah: Where was Bobbi Kristina in all of that craziness?

Whitney: I got her out of the house earlier than I had left. I placed her with my brother, Gary, and my sister-in-law, Pat, who lived five minutes down the street from me, because it was getting to be a little much. They took care of her for fifth and sixth grade while she went to school. While I just tried to get it all together and say: "What was I going to do? Where was I going to go? How was I going to do this? How was I going to get out of this?" And once I made some moves, I took her with me to California, and we lived there for a year and a half.

Oprah: So were you separated from Bobby Brown for a time when we didn't even know it?

Whitney: Yeah. I left, but nobody really knew.

Oprah: Do you feel that even doing that—taking her out of the house—that she saw too much? She heard too much? Experienced too much?

Whitney: It was enough. She saw enough. The spitting in the face was enough. She said: "Mom, did he spit in your face?" And I looked in her eyes and she looked in mine and I said: "Yes. But it's all right." And she said: "No, it's not. No, it's not. It's not, Mom. It's not all right." I said: "If you can do me a favor. Just do this for Mommy. I'm going to put my trust in God. You put your trust in me. You may not understand it now, but just trust me. I'm not letting you go. I will hold on to you with my dear life. Just trust me. And we will get up out of this. And we'll be happier for it. And then as you get older, I'll tell you little by little as to why things are happening and why Mommy has to go."

But we got to California and she was very angry. Did not understand. She fought me. But I kept coming back with love. I kept holding her in my arms. I kept knocking on that door and I kept getting on my knees. I kept praying. Telling her I loved her.

And then I waited for him. I did. I waited for him to come back to say all the stuff that he was doing—and he was doing a lot of ugly things outside the marriage. I just kept thinking: "He's dragging this into my home and my daughter. I can't have this. I can't let her think that this is love, or this is the way it should be."

Oprah: You were still, even after moving to California, hoping that you could get back together?

Whitney: Yeah, I waited.

Oprah: What finally made you decide, "I'm out of this marriage"? You've gone to California. You waited.

Whitney: I waited. I went to California. I got me a little home there in Laguna. Some friends of mine got a plane for me. Flew me there out in a private jet. I got with a counselor. ...

And after a couple of months, he would say he was coming, and he never came, and my only concern was my daughter and her perception of her father. And me trying to tell her the truth about that was very difficult because she was just a kid—13 growing into being a young woman. So I gave her bits and pieces. But that Internet and that computer, man, tells you and lets you know, and she was, like, "Mom, this is Dad?" And I was, like, "Yeah. Okay." And she saw him with the—

Oprah: Other women.

Whitney: Thank you. Just crazy things, you know? And she said, "Oh, no." She said, "No, divorce him."

Oprah: Your *daughter* said.

Whitney: Let him go. "Mom," she said. "I see how you are. You stay here with me. You love me. You take me to school. You do things with me. You don't disappoint me. You don't lie to me. You're there for me. He tells me he's coming, and he never comes. He tells me he's going to give me things, he never brings them." She says, "You don't deserve that, and neither do I." She was far more intelligent than I could ever imagine.

Oprah: If your daughter hadn't said that, do you think you would have stayed? You'd still be struggling with it? Or was that a turning moment for you?

Whitney: My spirit wouldn't let me. The spirit of God is stronger than any spirit that you can ever have. And at some point, it helps you to make a decision. I had my sister-in-law who was praying for me. ... My brothers were there for me. You know, my family. I had members that had stood by me. ...

And then there was Clive who said, "I don't believe it's over." He said: "No way. God didn't give you gifts like that and say it's over. It can't end like this. It can't go like this." He said, "Plus, I still got some more left in me." And I thought, "Wow." He said: "I'm going to give you a year and you make a decision. But the world's waiting, and they want to hear you again."

I'd go to the grocery store, and people would say: "When are you coming out with

another record? I want to hear your song. I want to hear you sing again." I felt the warmth of people. Of the mothers saying, "Now that's who I used to listen to when I was growing up."

Oprah: How is Bobbi Kristina now?

Whitney: She's good. I don't know how to describe her. She's more and more like me every day.

Oprah: She's starting to actually look more like you.

Whitney: She does. When she was a kid, she was looking so much like her father—her body frame, her face, her skin.

Oprah: You can see yourself in her?

Whitney: Oh, all over her. She writes creatively all the time. She writes. And she sings. She's really starting to sing really well now.

Oprah: Is she good?

Whitney: Yeah, she is. I want her to take her time. I don't want anybody to touch her. I want to groom her.

Oprah: So if she chooses to be in this business, that's okay with you?

Whitney: Yeah, but I will be there. Like my mom was there with me. When I was just getting in the business, and they came for me when I was 14 and wanted to sign me, my mother said: "No way. Whitney's got a lot more to learn."

Oprah: Are you enjoying being a mother?

Whitney: I love it. I love being a mother and watching her become a woman. There are times where she's going through that young womanhood where there's the boys, and there are little things and you got her little feelings being hurt. I love her to come to me, and she trusts me. She trusts me and I can tell her the truth and say: "Listen. It's going to happen, but we're going to get through it. We're going to make it." That kind of thing. I love that.

She's proud of me. And I'm proud of her. She got into bed with me this morning and she said: "Mama, can I just tell you how much I love you and how proud I am of you? You're record's kicking tail all over the world. I just proud of you. We did it, Mom. We did it." **Oprah:** Who do you love?

Whitney: The Lord. I do. I'm so humbled and so thankful. By his grace, his

goodness. And for never giving up on me. I love my mother. My daughter. My relatives. My sisters. My brothers. I love you. Because I knew somewhere in the background you were there praying too.

Oprah: I was, I was.

Whitney: And as horrible as they tried to make it to be. It was just life's experiences. I'd never been through anything as heavy. I had a good childhood. I had a good mom. Had a great dad. My father passed away, and I loved him so dearly. And that put a real dent in everything because that's when it really started getting crazy—my dad passed away. And my husband really started acting up. Acting out. Then, when my dad left, he really started acting out. I guess he figured, "He's gone now."

Oprah: You don't have your dad.

Whitney: Yeah. But I had my mother.

Oprah: But your dad suing you, that had to be hard.

Whitney: Well, my dad was influenced by people that were lying. My father was sickly at the time. He was in the hospital. I was paying the bill. I took care of my father.

Oprah: So you forgave him?

Whitney: Absolutely.

Oprah: In the end, you forgave him.

Whitney: Absolutely. I love my dad. I knew he was sickly. My father was in his 80s at that point, and he was in the hospital constantly with heart problems and diabetes. And people were trying to get money from him, extract money from him. Blackmail him.

Oprah: At the time, it was painful, was it not?

Whitney: It was very. It was a period of a couple of years when we didn't speak at all. But when he got sickly, really sickly, I went to the hospital and I said: "Let's end this right now. But you're my father. I love you. I'm going to be here in the end. I'm going to be here, and I'm going to be the one who's going to take care of you." And finally, when it all kind of came down, and it all was the end, everything was in my hands.

Oprah: I heard you chose not to go to the funeral but spent private time with him?

Whitney: I had a memorial the day before the funeral that was my own. That was my own. That was just my family for me, Dionne, my cousin DeeDee, my mother, my family. There was so much press. So many media. The media was following me around. I couldn't grieve in privacy. So I had my own service. And then my father was a very influential man in city of Newark, New Jersey, so he had a lot of friends, so I had one for them that they could go to. But I had my own.

Oprah: How difficult was Michael Jackson's passing for you?

Whitney: Devastating. I have so many good memories of spending time with him. I've known his family for so many years. For at least 20. I thought: "This can't be true. This can't be true." I knew he was on painkillers at one time. I didn't know how far and how deep it was. I just remember doing the anniversary special, the 30th anniversary, and I remember looking at Michael and I remember looking at myself.

Oprah: That's when you were so bone thin. You were frail.

Whitney: I was, yeah. I was getting scared.

Oprah: Looking at him?

Whitney: Yeah, and then looking at myself going: "No, I don't want this to be like this. This can't happen. Not both of us." ...

Oprah: You were doing your own drugs at the time, right? That's why you were so thin, right?

Whitney: Yeah, but there were things that were happening emotionally to me. I was worried.

Oprah: For him?

Whitney: Yeah. I was worried for me. There was the marriage thing. A lot of things that were going on. Mike and I were very close.

Oprah: When was the last time you saw him?

Whitney: I think it was that time when I spoke to him during the trial a lot. By that time, he had cut a lot of people off. He didn't want to be seen.

Oprah: Did he cut you off?

Whitney: He'd speak to me on the phone, but he didn't want me to see him. No one have I ever met quite like that young man. And to have it end like that? Saddens me.

Oprah: Was there ever a time when you thought you wouldn't come out of [drug addiction]? That you thought that: "All right, this is the way it's going to be. I'm going

to be in this room smoking my weed laced with cocaine, watching TV? ...

Whitney: You know what? For some reason, Oprah, I never got to that point. Something always had a fight in me.

...

Oprah: What did you learn? What is the most you've learned through this entire process of sitting there with the drugs, of the evil eyes on the wall?

Whitney: It was difficult because he wouldn't let me go. He did not want me to leave.

Oprah: And you didn't think you had the strength to leave on your own. And that's why you prayed to God for just one day.

Whitney: "Just one day give me the strength and I'll go. Just one day. Because I can't live like this anymore. I'm not going to share him with this one and that one. I'm not doing that. He's not going to drag this into my home, and I'm not going to let my daughter think that that's love."

Oprah: Why did you think you couldn't leave without that prayer? What was holding you there?

Whitney: Habit. Conforming to a way of life. Thinking that it's all right, that it will get better.

...

Oprah: So does that mean you're drug-free?

Whitney: Yes, ma'am. Don't think I don't have desires for it. There are times it takes a minute to cleanse, get off. Get off me. Just leave me alone. Get off me. I have to pray it away. I'll have a drink every now and then. Don't get me wrong. If you see me at a bar, having a drink, don't think...

Oprah: Don't say she's gone back.

Whitney: No, please don't do that to me.

Oprah: Cause drinking was not your issue.

Whitney: No. That's not an issue for me. No weed. No coke. No.

Oprah: Do you think you ever will again? Be tempted?

Whitney: Oprah, I can only take today. One day at a time. Right now, no.

Oprah: So now we stand here with *I Look to You*. All these many years later. I was listening to that cut this morning, "I Look to You," and meditating. When you first recorded that song, who were you singing that to? When you're saying, "I look to you."

Whitney: Let me first say that the song was written by Robert Kelly, who we all know as R. Kelly, 10 years ago for me. ... It was the first song presented to me for the album, and I wanted that to be the flavor of what I wanted people to know about me and where I look to. How I got over, how I made it through some of the rough times.

Oprah: So you're talking about something greater than yourself.

Whitney: Greater than me. Far greater than me. Absolutely. Somebody bigger than you and I.

Oprah: And that's why you titled the album *I Look to You*, because that is the essence.

Whitney: Yes. That is the essence of what I wanted everyone to realize and to feel that this song—this album—is all about.

Oprah: Well, you know my favorite cut on this album. ... Diane Warren and David Foster's ["I Didn't Know My Own Strength"]. Did the song that seemed to come from really the essence of part of your experience?

Whitney: Yes. ... When I think about it now when I sing it, when I started singing it, it went even beyond myself. I went beyond myself because I thought about women who battle cancer. Women who battle bad, domestic situations. I thought about single parents, mothers *and* fathers. Children who are growing up under such strenuous situations. Not only mine. I went deep down into another place of other people's situations, and I was like, "This is for everybody."

...

Oprah: When I listened to the second cut on the CD about *Nothin' But Love*, I think that's what people have for you. Are you feeling that love now?

Whitney: Yeah, but mostly for myself. That's the great part. That's the good feeling. I have it for me.

Oprah: So much seems to be riding on this moment. Do you think of this as a comeback? Is this a comeback? Or a come out or a come-through?



Whitney: A come-through. It's a come-through moment. There's a song on there, R. Kelly wrote it: "Don't call it a comeback. I've been here for years."

...

Oprah: Do you now know your own strength?

Whitney: I know from whence my help cometh. I do know that. And I know that it's strong within me. If ever I get low, I get weak, I know where I can turn to. I love the spirit of God so much that I'm not willing to trade that for anything. I'm not trading that for nothing. For nothing. Because I feel joy that I can't even speak about. And peace that passes all understanding.

Oprah: Because I know you can't get through this without God.

Whitney: I was by myself so much during those years in L.A., and I would just sit and I would read the word and I would stop and I would think, "What do you want me to know?" The Holy Spirit would speak to me and it would guide me. And I wouldn't know how I would get to this place or that place. Or how I did this or how I was go into the studio and sing again. But I did it.

See the whole Interview at:

<http://thewhitneyvault.ch/persona/interviews/whitneys-exclusive-interview-on-oprah/>