**Tiearra D. Steele**

To Orlan my love, if I never accomplish anything else in my life I will still be a proud woman because I am your mother. Your intelligence, sense of humor and great compassion for others inspires me. Follow your dreams, forget all the doubters and never change who you are; God made you different for a reason. Always follow your heart but take your brain with you.

To my family and friends, the craziest, most eccentric people on Earth, thank you for always believing in me even when I didn’t believe in myself. It’s rare to find people like you in the world. Through the ups and downs, laughs and tears, love and warm embraces, we have experienced this thing called life together. I love you all from the depths of my heart.

To my business partner, my best friend, you inspire me in ways you don’t even realize. I cannot wait for the world to see what I already know; how amazing you are. Thank you for going on this journey (no pun intended) with me. I couldn’t imagine doing this with anyone else. Let your light shine and your dark reveal the stars that shine in the night.

To all the teachers and mentors I’ve come across in my life that have pushed me, taught me to embrace my gifts and never be afraid, I thank you. The world needs more like you.

To my city, my small little village of Brooklyn, Illinois, thank you for making me who I am. There is a softness and a ferociousness I have inside me because of where I grew up. The family and community of Brooklyn is forever engrained in my soul. It really does take a village.

**Lynell E. Everett**

**Marilyn Everett**: You are the best mother I could have ever asked for and it is quite clear why I chose you. Everything that I do is for you.

**Evette Fears**: Sister, I’ve followed you around the country trying my best to keep you as close as possible. I don’t see how I could possibly love you more than I already do. Just saying thank you is not enough, but thanks for Ninja.

**Maurice Everett**: Daddy, I am the bold, assertive, take no sh\*t woman that I am because of you. You taught me how to play this game called life and showed me that the world was bigger than East St. Louis. No matter how old I get, I will always be Daddy’s little girl.

**Maurice “Julio” Everett**: Big Brother, you always make me laugh! All these higher education degrees I have under my belt and I’m still not as smart as you. Thank you.

**Michael “Mike” Fears**: It seems like a betrayal to call you my brother-in-law because you’ve been supportive and caring like we’re blood. I can’t see how I would have accomplished anything without you.

**Montrissa “Nette” Everett**: Sis, what words can I possibly use to express my gratitude and love for you? None that are worthy spring to mind and I know a lot of words. You are an amazing woman and I thank God everyday that Julio had enough sense to marry you (too bad he didn’t have enough to keep you lol).

**EVOLUTION**: Ladies, ladies, ladies! You’ve seen me at my absolute worse and still stood by me. I’m not sure why you did, but I can’t express how grateful I am for each and every one of you.

**Iecia Davis**: You uplifted and carried me through the worst times of my life. You know my deepest, darkest secrets and I trust you with everyone of them. You were there when the dreams that are now coming to fruition were just seeds in my head and you supported everyone of them. I will always love you.

Sandy “**IV**” Ketchen, Maurice “**Moe** **Moe**” Everett, Michael “**Sugar** **Bear**” Fears, Keiran “**Chunk** **Chunk**” Fears, Ayanna “**Ya**-**Ya**” Concepcion, Natalia “**Tweety**” Concepcion, “Jaden “**Taz**” Concepcion, Cam “**Cam**-**Cam**” Wilkey, Caden “**Cay**” Wilkey, Nevaeh “**Vaeh**” Alexander, Nelani “**Lana** **Pooh**” Alexander: My babies! Tee-Tee loves you all so very much.

**Tiearra Steele**: To say that you are my best friend is wholly and completely inadequate. Those words hardly describe who you are to me. The only way to express how important you are to me is to say that my purpose on earth can’t be fulfilled without you. This is my passion, but I don’t want to do it without you. I love you! Now let’s go set this world on fire.