

I Could Have SAVED THEM

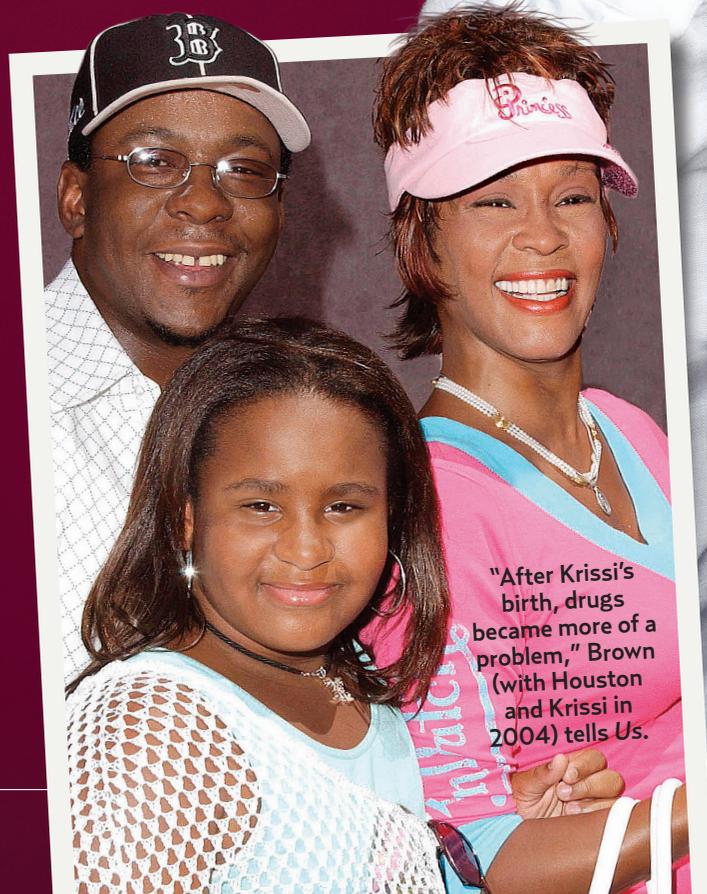
A remorseful **Bobby Brown** opens up to *Us* about life with Whitney, Krissi — and their tragic demise **BY JAMIE BLYNN**

Eddie Murphy tried to warn him. After Bobby Brown exchanged numbers with Whitney Houston at the 1989 *Soul Train* Music Awards, he approached his actor pal for the scoop. “Eddie had dated Whitney, so I thought I would casually ask about her,” Brown writes in his bombshell memoir, *Every Little Step* (out June 13). “She’s cool,” he said. “She just smokes too much weed for me.” Brown was floored: “Whitney Houston was too wild for Eddie Murphy — that sure opened my eyes.”

Brown would learn a lot more about the iconic singer during their 14-year marriage. In the book, he alleges his late ex-wife was a drug-addled bisexual who faked a miscarriage. For his part, the New Edition member — no stranger to narcotics himself — admits to a co-starring role in the doomed couple’s fiery, dysfunctional and, at times, physically abusive relationship, part of which was seen on Bravo’s alarming 2005 reality series *Being Bobby Brown*. Shortly thereafter, the dad of their then-teen daughter, Bobbi Kristina, had managed to get clean. “I decided I’d gone too far and went to rehab to get my life together,” he writes. “But the problem was, when I came back home, Whitney was still using. So she would hide it from me.

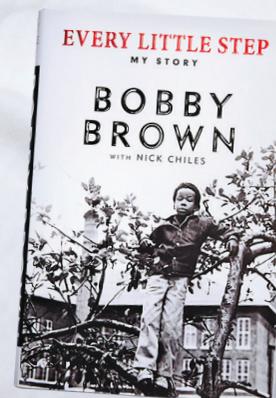
She’d leave home for days at a time so she could do drugs.” Brown insists he was the one who left Houston, in 2006. They divorced a year later.

On February 11, 2012, the *Bodyguard* star was found facedown in a bathtub at the Beverly Hilton hotel. In her system: a mix of cocaine, marijuana, Benadryl and Xanax. “If I could go back in time, I would have been there,” Brown, 47, tells *Us*. “I would let her know I loved her,



“After Krissi’s birth, drugs became more of a problem,” Brown (with Houston and Krissi in 2004) tells *Us*.

“Writing has been therapy for me,” says Brown of his new memoir.



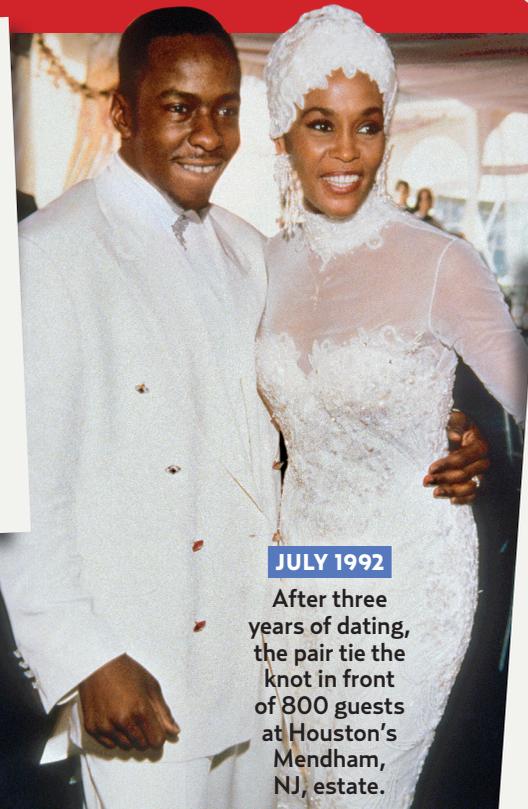
The Way They Were

Through 14 tumultuous years, the R&B bad boy took life step-by-step with the pop songbird



SEPTEMBER 1983

"It still blows my mind," Brown says of his success with *New Edition* (clockwise from top left: Ricky Bell, Ronnie DeVoe, Brown, Ralph Tresvant and Michael Bivins).



JULY 1992

After three years of dating, the pair tie the knot in front of 800 guests at Houston's Mendham, NJ, estate.



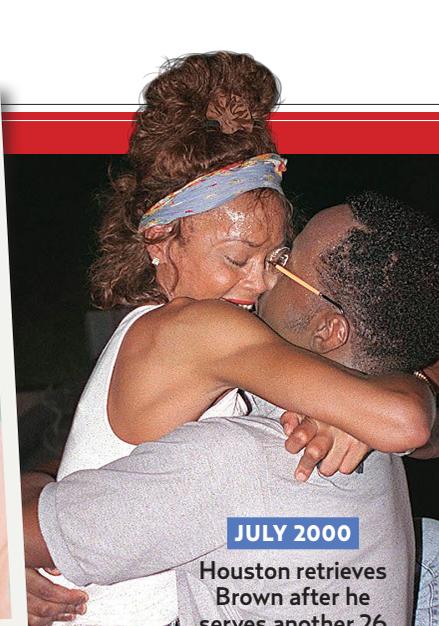
NOVEMBER 1993

They filmed the video for their first duet, the Top 20 "Something in Common," for his third disc, *Bobby*.



JUNE 1996

Brown (in *St. Bart's*) writes that they "loved, lusted after and adored each other."



JULY 2000

Houston retrieves Brown after he serves another 26 days for violating his probation from the 1996 DUI charges.



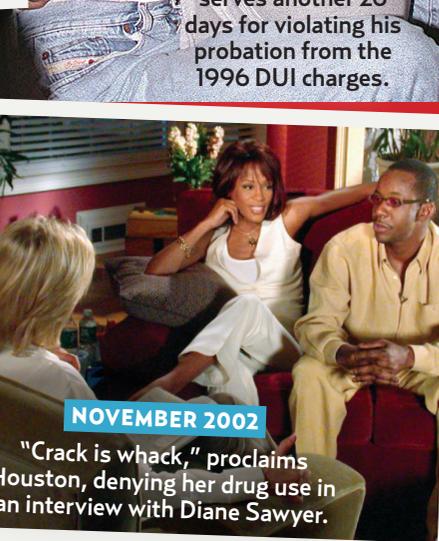
JUNE 1993

"She loved her baby a lot," Brown tells *Us* of his ex, who brought Bobbi Kristina on stage at 3 months old.



JANUARY 1998

Their court-ship: A Florida judge sentences him to five days in jail for crashing her Porsche in 1996.



NOVEMBER 2002

"Crack is whack," proclaims Houston, denying her drug use in an interview with Diane Sawyer.

I cared for her and that she needs to take care of herself."

Tragically, only three years later, 21-year-old "Krissi" was found submerged in a tub at her Atlanta-area townhouse. While recalling how she was due to begin an extended stay with him just two days later, Brown chokes up: "I wish I could have saved her."

Today, the Grammy winner is trying to be the dad he couldn't be before. Speaking to *Us* May 31, the father of six (his wife of four years, Alicia Etheredge, 40, is pregnant with his seventh, due this fall) paused to marvel at Bodhi, 11 months, who's learning to crawl: "She's getting around pretty good!" Brown hopes his tell-all will give

him the fresh start he craves. "To be a better person," he says, "I had to get all the cobwebs out." Here, the "Don't Be Cruel" crooner shares never-before-told tales and excerpts from his book.

THE HIGH LIFE

Brown and Houston were addicted to each other from the start, boasts the man Houston dubbed "the original king of R&B." In April 1992, he gave her a 20-carat diamond engagement ring; the morning of their July 18 wedding, though, it was Brown who was surprised when he caught her snorting cocaine. "I thought she was nervous," he says. "I didn't think it was such a problem." By 1993, hard drugs were a shared interest.

"It's hard to stop once you start," he confides. "Especially when you have so much money."

When I was about 30, about seven years into our marriage, the drugs almost killed me. I had been doing way too much — crack, powder, freebase. . . . I was trying to come down off a three-day high. I still had maybe an ounce of crack and an ounce of heroin left. I was on my way to the kitchen to cook more of the stuff. I was smoking a crack-laced joint and sniffing heroin while preparing to cook more crack. In addition, I was drinking Courvoisier and beer. All of a sudden, as I was walking back toward my drug den, I lost all control of my limbs. I just fell out onto the floor. Whitney thought I was playing.

"Get the f--k up!" she barked in that snappy Whitney way. "Stop playin'!" She bent over and took the drugs out of my hand and started using them herself, while I was still splayed out on the floor. Later on that night, they took me to the hospital, where they determined that I had had a stroke. The doctors were amazed I wasn't dead. I probably came close to dying four or five times. Our daughter was up in the middle of all of this. She often saw her mother and father high, and was around the two of us when we were f--ked up.

REALITY BITES

After serving jail time in 2004 for charges related to a DUI, and being charged four months later for

failing to pay child support, Brown was desperate for positive PR, so he signed up for the show. Unfortunately, Being Bobby Brown had the opposite effect. In one unforgettable scene, Brown describes a constipated Houston prodding him to help dislodge a stool stuck in her behind, calling the gesture "black love."

People wondered whether we were embarrassed by our depiction on the show, but we laughed our asses off. Not only was it fun to do, it was therapy for us. We had a chance to see how we acted around each other, how we responded to situations, the mistakes we made. But all along, we were just being ourselves. If people thought Whitney was something different, they got a clear glimpse of

who my ex-wife was through that show. She was a down-ass, horny chick. She was the woman I loved. I was the man she loved. That's what the show was about — not drugs or anything else.

STATE OF AFFAIRS

Postdivorce, Brown says, Houston disparaged him to their daughter, telling the then-14-year-old that he was sleeping around. Trying to defend himself, Brown told Krissi about Houston's dalliance with protégée Brandy's younger brother, Ray J. "It was a stupid move," he admits. "But I felt she needed to know it wasn't just her father that had made mistakes." Technically, neither situation involved cheating, but Brown reveals that both spouses were often unfaithful during their relationship.

Whitney did her share of cheating too. In fact, she cheated before I did. She slept with quite a few of the producers and artists she worked or associated with over the years. I won't drop names, because they're still around and a few view me as a friend. One of the affairs I am willing to mention is the one she had with Tupac [Shakur]. This occurred in the first few years of our marriage, during a time when I thought we were in a good place. The news of the affair really f--ked me up. I could not believe Whitney was willing to jeopardize what we had, which I know was hot, heavy and unique, for some fling.

FAMILY FRICTION

Houston and Krissi grew to be more like BFFs than mother and daughter. The teen even bunked at an L.A. rehab while Houston sought treatment in 2011. As for Brown, "Whitney would insist on having security present when I saw Krissi," he writes, leaving "the impression in Krissi's mind that I was poison." When Houston passed, their daughter, then 18, sought comfort in Nick Gordon, 22, who Houston had raised as a son from the age of 12.

Krissi had been calling Nick her “brother” all along. After Whitney died, suddenly she started referring to him as her “boyfriend.” I was extremely alarmed by that development. “We’re in love,” she said to me dreamily over the phone. “Little girl, you don’t even know what love is,” I said. Then we saw on Instagram that she claimed they had gotten married. She displayed a picture of what was supposed to be her wedding ring. But I recognized it right away — it was the huge diamond ring I had given to Whitney 25 years earlier. I got her on the phone again to question her. She admitted to me that they really weren’t really married.

▶ FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

Discovered unconscious in 2015 in the home she shared with Gordon, Krissi was rushed to the hospital, where it was determined she’d been without oxygen for an unknown period. Brown immediately flew across the country on friend Tyler Perry’s private jet to be by her side.

When I walked into her room at North Fulton Hospital and saw my baby lying there with tubes and machines connected to her body, I was devastated. It all became tragically real. My first order of business was to make sure everyone understood that, as her father, I would be the one making all the decisions regarding her care. There were still a ton of questions about what happened to my daughter. We didn’t yet know anything about the drugs in her system or the abuse that she had [allegedly] endured [from Gordon]. Right away, I made it clear that, no matter what, Nick Gordon couldn’t be allowed anywhere near my daughter.

I was committed to rolling her around in a wheelchair for the rest of her life, sitting down and feeding her every day, by myself, if that’s what was necessary. She would breathe on her own for an extended period, like 24 hours, but then she’d start struggling and they’d put her

back on the machine. She was also getting physical therapy, where she would sit up in a chair with her eyes open and track my movements around the room with her eyes.

▶ A FATHER’S GOODBYE

After months in a medically induced coma, Krissi was removed from life support and died a month later. Brown slapped Gordon, 26, with a \$10 million wrongful-death suit for assault, battery and emotional distress. “I hope the district attorney charges someone with the murder of my daughter,” he says. “Whatever happened that night, whether it was an accident or on purpose, something happened to my daughter and he knows.” In the meantime, Brown has yet to visit Krissi’s final resting place. “Gravesites scare me,” he explains. “I haven’t visited [the cemetery plots of] my mom, dad, grandmother or friends that have passed on either.”

I had a private conversation with Krissi, sitting next to her bed in the hospice, moving my face very close to hers. “It’s OK for you to let go. You’ve been fighting for a long time.” But she actually hung on for two more weeks. The night she passed, I had another little talk with her. “I love you, baby girl. And I just want you to know it’s OK for you to rest now.” I kissed her, got up and walked out of the room. Within an hour, I got a phone call from another nurse. This time she really was gone.

Losing the love of my life was the hardest thing, but I was able to find someone who gave me the strength to pick myself back up and keep moving on. Then I had to find a way to get through the loss of my child. But I take one day at a time, keep putting one foot in front of the other. **US**

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Houston, Brown, her mom, Cissy, and Crawford (far right) made nice at a 1994 event in NYC.

Whit’s Secret

» Though Houston vehemently denied reports she had a long-term same-sex romance with best friend and assistant Robyn Crawford, 55 — the two met at age 16 working at an East Orange, New Jersey community center — Brown insists it’s true. “I know,” he tells *Us*. “We were married for 14 years. There are some things we talked about that were personal to us.” Brown alleges Houston’s family, including her mother Cissy, 00, did not approve of the relationship and insisted Crawford be fired. “I really feel that if Robyn was accepted into Whitney’s life,” says Brown, “Whitney would still be alive today. She didn’t have no close friends with her anymore.” For her part, Crawford shared memories with *Esquire* upon Houston’s 2012 death, calling her “a loyal friend” and admitting, “I loved her laughter, and that’s what I’ll miss most.”

A Supernatural Sex Encounter

» In the 1990s, Brown bought an Atlanta mansion from “the Scarface of porn,” Mike Thevis. “I sensed that a lot of evil sh-t had gone down in that house,” he writes. “To this day I believe the house was haunted . . . We would often see white women walk down the hallway. One memorable night, one of the ghosts descended from the ceiling and had sex with me. After you stop laughing, I need you to hear what I’m saying because I’m not making this up. And let me add: this was before I touched any drug besides weed and alcohol. In my bedroom I had a big round bed with a mirrored ceiling looming above. I always slept in the nude, so one night I woke up to the sensation of a woman on top of me. In the mirrors I could see a white woman straddling me on the bed . . . I could feel my penis inside of her and everything.”

Diva Dalliances

Humpin’ around! Brown bedded Madonna in ‘88 and Janet in ‘89

The Material Girl summoned Brown to her studio. “The next thing I knew,” he recalls, “strange things were happening to me. When Madonna wants something, she’ll take it!” Later, he hooked up with “uninhibited” Janet Jackson. But the *Control* singer, then 00, ended the months-long escapade, which occurred behind future husband Rene Elizondo Jr.’s back. At West Hollywood’s Le Dufy Hotel, “we were lying in bed after sex,” Brown writes. “Janet told me she loved me, but she wasn’t ‘in love’ with me.” He writes she also explained, “My father won’t allow me to be with a black man.” Though Jackson was naked, “I exploded and threw her out.”



Brown calls his relationship with Jackson (in 1989) “intoxicating.”

Madonna in 1988.

Chicken Fried With Cocaine!

» Brown got his first taste of drugs at age 10 while living in Boston’s Orchard Park projects. To surprise his mom, substitute teacher Carole, and dad, construction worker Herbert, “I decided I would use the large block of flour I found in the freezer to make some fried chicken,” Brown writes. Ignoring what he describes as a “strangely pungent smell,” the innocent began to eat his recipe, “feeling weirder with each bite.” Then Carole got home. “At first she was smiling at the idea that little Bobby had made dinner,” he writes. “Then her gaze swept across the kitchen and she got hit by the full brunt of the scene — the smell, the mess, the powder. With horror, she realized what I had done: I fried the chicken in her cocaine.” Months later, he writes, he learned “my mother had been selling dope for years.”