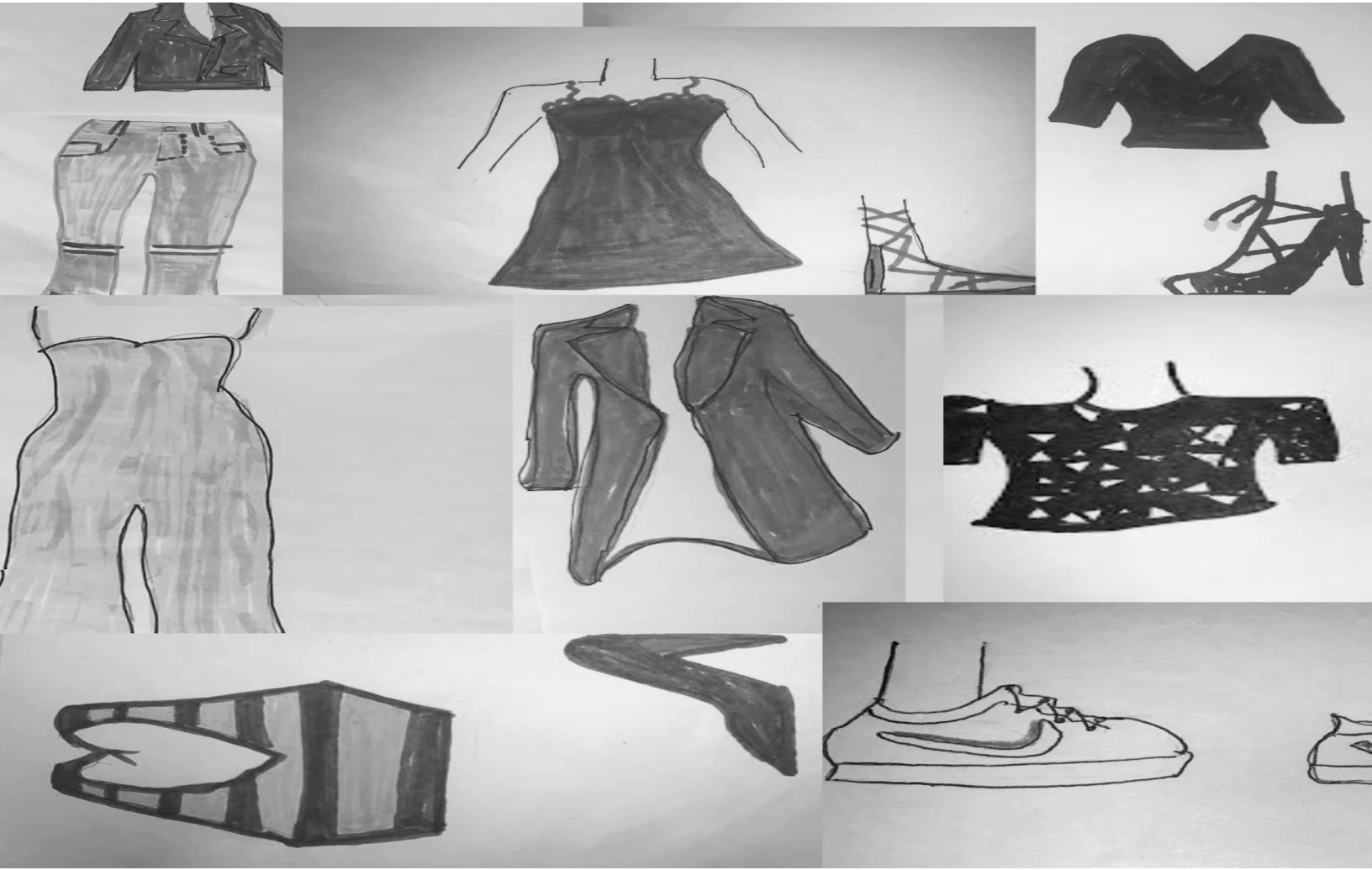




Lori's Lens

WHAT FASHION MEANS TO ME



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Prologue

Fashion is more than the clothing you wear and how you wear it. Fashion is emotion, that feeling you get when you try on the perfect girls night out outfit or when your favorite mid-rise crochet crop top you wanted to wear spoils your night. Fashion is self esteem , communicating without words and what those words say. In this book you will read how each form of dress holds a story to tell, how the power of fashion can leave you feeling empowered or insecure and garments ability to hold as well as create some of our happiest moments.

Foreword

I loved “The Different Flavors of Lori” . It was filled with so much life. Reading this story I could imagine every single fashion statement mentioned before even seeing the beautiful illustrations. I learned so much about you from these short stories and it is true when you say, “Fashion is self esteem , communicating without words and what those words say.” Fashion holds such an important power in society forever. Fashion has always given the statement; it either makes you or breaks you. I enjoyed the memories you shared and in your last chapter “First LBD” you looked amazing and don’t regret not dancing because now you can dance and take the night away feeling confident, sexy, and empowered in your look. Always remember it is not the clothes that wear you ,it is you who wears the clothes.

Sincerely,
Chadonii Campbell

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Chapter One ~ Princess Peach

The air was humid and hot; it seemed to always feel like it was going to rain. It was October 19 2003 in the south of Dominican Republic, I was in my grandmother's house and my mother was in NY. She was trying to build a new life for me and my sister, so she couldn't attend my birthday party. My grandmother's house sat in the middle of an active street. It was a big white house with a front porch and a long highway that connected the front side of the house to the back. In the back of the house held a big yard, which is where the party was held. The Gazebo was decorated with butterflies and held the butterfly cake that matched the color of my dress. My grandmother from my dad's side, Thalm, wouldn't leave my side that day. Before I was allowed to enter the party she sang a song she would always sing “ *dame mi pescadito, que yo quiero mi pescadito* “. It was a popular kids song at the time and it was just what I needed.

As I walked into the party my peach pink silk dress flowed in the air. It was a below the knee A line dress that had four layers of tulle. Covering the tulle was a peach pink silk fabric layer that was a sheer layer. The sheer layer was embraced and laced with flower detailing. It also had a bow at the center waistline and short cuffed sleeve with silk finish. This dress was paired with 1 inch closed toe cream heels and pony curls. Like many dresses in DR this was custom made for \$100 dollars by the town's local tailor.

My grandma would tell me how compliments were given on my birthday custom but also on my hair. My hair was placed into 10 small ponytails slick down neatly with gel. The light pink hair ties match my dress perfectly. I had black curl hair that was *twisted* together with moss and a cone. The curls lasted the whole night and so did the glow on my face. Before the party my grandmother Thalm had taken me to shower outside, with a bucket and cold water she *washed* my face. The cold water adds a glow to my skin and face afterwards she would *lotion* me up and add lil oil on my forehead and cheeks. Being young I wasn't allowed any lip balm or lipstick.

While my mother wasn't there and I wasn't used to being apart from her for so long, a part of me was a little quiet, my grandmother said. I was sad but something that brought me joy was spinning around in my dress, I felt free and beautiful. The heels also added to my confidence. I always been sassy and the cream 1 inch heel made me feel older like the women in my family, strong, tall and beautiful.



Chapter Two - Look mommy I made it

Without me knowing it, this was the last time I got to see my family. It was after the birthday party my dad, Robert and I went to sleep over in grandmother, Thalm big white house. They held me tight that night. In the morning I was picked up by Nancy a family friend and neighbor she was 6ft tall, blonde hair and bold fashion choices. My dad who had taken care of me since day one got me ready to leave. We said our last goodbyes and the car took off. The airport was 4 hours away as I played I watched the sun come up. We sat in the aircraft for 4 hours before reaching LGA. I was scared the whole time but Nancy comforted me watching the clouds pass I held on to her, until I was asleep.

It was winter when I arrived and you can feel it, according to Nancy. At the gate I awaited my mother Danis, who I haven't seen in a few months. With her she carried an oversized light sky blue silk coat, it was the first coat I ever owned. It was a mid length coat with a hoodie that had a cotton interior. The zippers matched the coat and appeared hidden as the silk blue trimming lay over the zipper, the pockets were slip in and sat in the middle of the coat near my stomach. Being that Tweety bird was my favorite character at the time my dad dressed me in a long sleeve rain blue cotton shirt with pink and yellow tweety bird design and pen blue denim mid raise jeans without buttons. While the coat was from Macy's the shirt and top belong to kids world on fordham which my mother had sent over.

My dad knew it would be cold and try to prepare me the best he could. Beside picking out my clothing he also did my hair. Matching the blue rain color of my shirt he made four curly ponytails each out and held up the matching blue ties. He *gel* down my hair even gave me simple baby hairs. He added my tweety bird lip balm, oiled my face and I was ready to go.

I felt comfortable in this outfit as the airport and aircraft is cold. I hated long sleeve and how thick the material was. While it wasn't an itchy fabric the material felt heavy. I wasn't use to that yet. However I won't dare say anything as a tweety bird was on my shirt. I remember putting on that sky blue coat over and over again. It felt heavy but not like the shirt which had a rough surface to it. The silk from the coat was soft to the touch, trapping my heat in the coat would give me a sense of safety, warmth and change as it represents a new beginning.



Chapter Three ~ Livingstone Blue

While my mother Dani's had been in the country for a while she only knew Spanish. At home we had one rule when I started attending school.... Keep the English for outside the house. Having Spanish as my native tongue, I took English courses, joined ESL and got on IEP. For my last english class ending elementary I was moved to a new class with a new teacher Ms. Livingston she was 6ft 2 heavy set women with the warmest smile. Little did I know she would become my most challenging teacher; we did a standard reading test once a month, spelling bees and read out louds. Which I would barely pass and misunderstood every chance I got. Reading out loud gave me this anxious feeling. For the final class project Ms. Livingstons wanted to do a play, so I decided on being the narrator who had the most lines of it all. I practiced over and over in class for months, I didn't realize this at the time but something changed.

I was late, as I walked to my sit I felt all eyes on me. I was wearing a turquoise blue short ball gown dress. The top of the dress was a strapless sweet heart neckline that had blue, sliver and holographic crystals highlighting it's shape on the top. The bottoms ended just below my hands and fleas out due to the tull; the tull was cover by a another layer of the turquoise fabric that was crutch up at the bottom giving it a ocean wave like look. The dress was made out of Polyester and elastic blend but the over the shoulder scarf was made out of polyester and nylon blend. It as a ocean blue scarf which was to tones darker then the dress and was long enough to reach over me and ending perfectly near my hand. The dress was paired with white 3 inch wedges that had one strap on around the anklet, another around the toe and one more go downward connecting the two. The downward strap had turquoise stones on the strap that match the dress.

For my hair I woke up at 6am to go to the salon. In four hours my hair was washed, detangled, put in rollers, blow dry and flat iron. I also did my nails to match my dress, it was my first set of acrylic nails. They were short square acrylic with blue and white french and sliver flowers that were trendy back in the early 2000's. Even though I was graduating my mother didn't allow me to wear any make up yet so I wore a nude pink gloss. After I *washed* my body and face I slipped into my graduation custom and sprayed my nicki minaj pink friday perfume. Before leaving my mother *ornamenting* me by giving me her gold and emerald green anklet, I felt special.

You could hear Ms. Livingston on stage... “came JUST in time? This award goes to someone very special. They started off struggling in the class but then they wanted to be the narrator. I got to work with them more and saw as they learned every line and pronouncing them correctly she is the definition of most improved.... Lori Perez.” As my wedges announced my every step I remember feeling empowered, accomplished and liberated. No one had a dress like mine, an experience like mine and growth like mine. This dress was more than a dress as it holds an unforgettable memory.



Chapter Four ~ Canada Eh ?

Summer had just begun and school was finally out. It was 2016. I was 15 at the time and was always around my older cousin Melody. She was a tall skinny 5'8 17 year old with black hair and blonde highlights. She was always effortlessly on trend andon her phone. A week before she would go away with her mother, my aunt Rosanna and her older sister Sharina decided she couldn't go; leaving a fully paid seat open. My cousin asked if I could come but I had one problem. I was happy to see the world as coming from DR was the last time I traveled, however my mother said " I always support you but you know if anything happens I can't fly to you, are you sure you want to go ?.... While that line scared me I knew I was ready to see more than the Bronx, I needed something new. So I went on a bus tour to Canada, Quebec, the French quarters were up first. It was the end of June and while in NY it was hotter than the sahara desert it was 57-60 degrees in Quebec there summers were a bit colder than ours.

Our first day of sightseeing ended near a cliff as we rushed out of the bus. You can see the sunset over the city. I wore a black mid-finish crop top with half sleeves and a crew neckline from what was known as the pretty girls store in Fordham and Grand concourse. The crop top had black triangle cutouts as the design. The cut outs were only on the front of the shirt and were small enough to cover most of my chest but big enough to show the black bar that was paired with it. As for the bottoms I wore vibrant spring leaf green jodhpur pant that cuffed at the waist and was a little loose on the sides because I was always a plus size girl; my curves filled up the looseness around the thigh area creating a more fitted bottom. The pants were a cotton and polyester mix blend polyester fabric from Clavin klein. I paired this outfit with white and light mint blue Nike sneakers that had short laces that would just hang on the sides.

For my hair I had *washed* my natural curly hair removing the oils and sweat from the previous bus ride. It smelled like the strawberry milk shampoo and conditioner I had packed. After that I used the two hotel blow dryers to *transform* my hair from kinky curls to puffy straight. My hair was ugly I hated it; with only 30 minutes until we left I learned that hotel blow dryers are not as what I know now are professional blow dryers. With my hair straight but puff I ran into my suitcase and got my curling iron separating each string of hair and curling it I started to love my hair. The blow dryer may have not done what I was expecting but It created *volume* for my curls. My hair was honey blonde and reached just above my elbow. The curls pulled the whole look together as my curls *bounced* as I ran to the bus that was about to leave.

Being in a new place made me feel nervous as I was away from my immediate family, however I felt bold and beautiful. The crop top shirt didn't really show any stomach but still had

cut outs that made me feel on trend just like my cousin. The pants gave me a flattering figure as it hid my stomach and the color made me feel seen. My hair was what really added to my happiness as it felt good to know that my kinky curls wouldn't have to be tied up, they were free and so was I.

