



Chapter Five ~ Canada Ehh ? Part Two

On the last tour of Canada, the bus stops on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls. I remember the boat ride being at the very bottom of the hill. It was the first thing me, my cousin Melody and my aunt Rosanna did. They put this transparent plastic pink rain coat to protect us from the water fall. The view was breathtaking and the water was freezing. After the ride was over me and my cousin ventured off into the strip. The strip was 5 streets long filled with rides, arcades, bumper cars and even a ferris wheel. We spent the day having fun finally, the trip was 6 days long and my cousin was either asleep or on her phone for 5 of them. It wasn't until we got to Niagara Falls that I finally enjoyed my trip. Beside the strip we took pictures in a giant chair, eat poutine which is a Canadian classic of fried,cheese and gravy, and even watched a movie. Before leaving my cousin wanted to get on the giant ferris wheel as it overlooked Niagara.

My fear of the ferris wheel seemed to make the ferris wheel look 1000+ ft high, I remember thinking as I wiped down the seat clean because of the dress. I was wearing a *pre-shaped* Forever 21 cotton A-line dress that *flared* out around the waist. The neckline of the dress was halter leaving my arms out. The dress was milky white color and the design of the dress had black printed black leafs scattered around the dress. My shoes were all white slip on ballerina flats with small triangle cut outs. Being more top heavy, my chest filled up the dress a little more than it was supposed. The dress shortened on me and ended a few inches below my bottom instead of above the knees. Because of this I wore these pink shorts I had packed for the pool that were elastic and nylon blend; the shorts weren't noticeable and protected me throughout the day. Since I didn't like having huge purses I carried a light pink wallet that had similar triangle cut outs as the Ballerina show. For my hair I paired it with half up half down pony curly hair due.

While getting ready I recall getting out of the shower and *moisturizing* my skin with a peach lotion my cousin had from bath and body works, it quickly *hydrate* my skin leaving a nice soft and shiny *texture*. Being that my dress was white I had to wear a bra. I try to pair it to my skin as best as possible to create a seamless look. I wore a nude bra and crossed the straps in the back so they wouldn't show through the halter cut out. As for my hair to create the half up half down curly hair I took some of the hotel conditioner to *slick* back my curled edges and create a *neat* high ponytail. When curling the back of my hair with no mirror because my cousin was in the bathroom I remember worrying about burning my acrylic nails. They were straight square medium length seashell nails which meant the pink glitter that filled my nails laid under the clear coat of acrylic.

I felt free and confident in the dress I wore, however I remember thinking I should have rethought my outfit for that day. Walking to the bottom of 5 street long strip for the Niagara falls boat ride to then back up for the movies, while running in and out of arcades and rides the ballerina flats made my feet pulse. I felt every crack, rock and pebble in my way. The dress also created concern as I would get on rides and have to keep pulling my dress down. Have you ever sat like a lady on bumper cars ? It isn't fun.



Chapter Six ~ First LBD

As I kept hanging out with my cousin we grew closer and closer while we were close in age. There was this two year gap that always seemed to make her feel way more experienced than me. We lived in the same building and she was two floors under, one day while laying in my room she came over. It's time for your first party, Melody said. The first thing that popped into my head was I needed a dress that screamed I'M OLD ENOUGH TO BE HERE and THIS IS NOT MY FIRST PARTY. I wanted to look like I belong but also steal the show. She told me it was a Spanish house party in 2015 so I went to Bni, a small boutique near my house that only sold dresses. As I went in I saw all types of dresses: sheer, red, animal print ... After trying out a few dresses I found one.

It was the last one in the store I looked up hoping it was my size, please be large, please be large. She pulled the dress for me and it fit like a glove. It was a matte charcoal black bodycon dress that sat just below my bottom. The front of the dress exposed a little bit of the chest area as it opened up into a deep v-line neckline that finished at the top of my stomach. Covering some of the exposure was this horizontal black line fabric that went from right side of my chest to left; there were four lines. The dress was fairly simple which was just what I wanted. It had a zipper in the black which matched the color of the dress and went unnoticed. The dress was mostly made of cotton spandex, polyester and elastic blend. It was my first LBD and the spandex gave me an hourglass figure. I paired it with leopard print wedges that were 4 inches; with a round front and one strap that sat on the ankle.

While getting ready for the party I showered and *washed* my face with African raw black soap. The minerals in the soap left my face *hydrated, refreshed* and created a *natural glow* on my cheeks and chin. This was important because I didn't like make up while everyone my age was exploring the wing liner I wanted to only add to the beauty I already owned. After I got out of the shower I made sure to *brush* my teeth with baking soap and toothpaste to give an extra clean. While getting dressed I paired my underwear with the dress color so the top doesn't seem so relieving; I wore a black bra, panties and black nylon shorts that sat under the dress because my mom was not a fan of the length. My *nails* also matched my dress as it was medium length stiletto nails with a matte top coat.

My cousin picked me up to leave and we walked up the street to her friend Milagro's house. It was a Dominican style party. Everyone was in the living room with the chairs pressed against the wall and people dancing in the middle of the room. There was hookah, drinks and I was nervous. I felt a bit out of place at my first party but I knew I looked drop dead gorgeous. I

got a few complaints and after staying a while my fears went away. I was able to enjoy the night and take off my heels that were killing me after walking up two hills to Milagro's house.



Chapter Seven ~ If I could go back I would dance....

As I grew into my teenage years I started to realize something that wasn't there before. It was November 14 2017 at this point I was going to fashion based high school and 17 at the time. I was young and was way past my first party. I always hang out with two people every day of my life. Madeline and Melody my cousin. While you may know Melody, Madeline was a bit older. When I was 17 she was 20 she was a top heavy skinny 5'7 girl with the face of a model. She was the "wild" one of the group. She got drunk first, smoked hookah first and of course always knew a good party. While I had gone to other parties this was my first time going out with her. I was nervous as she liked the older crowd. As everyone was getting ready I tried to base my outfit around theirs. Bralette, crop top, heels..... Okay I think I know what to wear.

While getting ready I must have changed like five times, after hating everything I wore I found an outfit. It was a loosely knitted crochet halter top in calm white, navy blue and cherry red. The crop top was cuffed at the end, giving it a *per-shaped* bottom. The top of the crop had two thin strings that I tried above my neck creating that halter shape. For the my bottoms I wore all black cotton pants that had no pockets or zippers. The pants were a mix blend of cotton, nylon and polyester. The pants were paired with a cream 4 inch pointed heel and gold ankle bracelet that had rubi red studs. Since it was fall I wore an ankle long polyester, twill jacket that had faux fur. The fur was heather blonde.

As I got ready for the party I took a shower leaving my skin feeling *smooth*, I then added oil body glitter from nicki minaj pink friday collection. It *moisturized* and added *shine* to my skin. The oil also held the pink friday perfume on skin for a longer period of time. For my hair I gel it back creating a slick clean look and added extensions to the bottom of the ponytail for *volume and length*. I curled the bottoms of the extensions *transferring* the ends from straight to curly. When I was done my ponytail went down my back. I never wore makeup as I found natural beauty to better. However when going to parties I had the same routine I would add some clear glitter lip gloss to *palm* up my lips and gold eyeshadow at the tip of the eye corners to *highlight* my eyes.

When we got to the party I saw that everyone was wearing leather, lace and skin. Everyone was showing off their bodies and I seemed to cover up. I took off my jacket and showed my crop top. It showed 20% of my stomach but took over 90% of my thought for the night. I felt out of place I was always a plus size girl and I always been confident but this part took that from me while Melody and Madeline dance I sat down pulling down my top I just

wanted the night to end. The outfit was beautiful but I just didn't have the confidence for it, If I could go back I would of danced.....



Chapter Eight - Bold & Sexy Christmas

Every year us Dominicans wake up before the sun on what we believe is Christmas day December 24. We spend the day cooking and getting ready for the night so we can eat, drink, dance and be reunited with our families in the living room. This year after realizing I had some insecurities to work through I went through a change. I was on Keto and was learning about having healthier relations with food. I went from 220 to 187 I lost more then 20 pounds on my own; I even found my own style and it was bold. To bring in the new change as well as new years that was only one week away I dyed my hair fuchsia pink. My mother thought I had lost some weight and my mind. As everyone started arriving my quirky Tia Blanca, my sister Maria, and the rest of the family, I headed to my room to get dressed.

I wore a Forever 21 black polyester mid cut crop top. The polyester was a mix blend as the shirt had a sheer finish. The neckline was open deep v which stopped right at the center of my chest, the sleeves were quarter length as it needed just above the elbow. For the bottoms I got a color matching black skirt that had distressed finishings, on the bottom left of the skirt was an open rip that had opened up to a circle the size of a small tennis ball. The rip gives the skirt the look of distressed jeans. While this was worn as a skirt it is actually a shirt I got from Marshalls on fordham road. I paired the outfit with the black tie up 4 inch heel from rainbows that had gold finishing on the black faux leather lace.

While getting ready I dye my hair twice *transforming* it from brown, to red and finally fushia pink. I first try to dye my hair with red kool -aid as I saw it on facebook and wanted to try it out my honey blonde hair turned period red. I hated the color and ran down stairs in which I brought 30 volume developer, bleach and Fushia pink from colongo, a professional hair coloring brand that reduces wash out of color. After bleach, washing and curling my hair it was pink and bouncy. I added oil to my hair for *hydration* and *shine* my hair had middle vertical part that split right down the middle it was up to my shoulders and beach weave curls were held in all night. I also added my *non-piercing* nose ring that was a rose gold hoop and *attached* it to my right side of my nose. *Applying* my boni brown brown nude lipstick on to my lips and gold glitter on the side of my eye corners. As for my clothing, I *slipped* on my black skirt and inserted my arms into the pre shaped sleeves in the black shirt; I made sure to have matching underwear as the mid length crop was reflective. I also had silhouette tip acrylics that were filled, drilled and shapes into a round top. The salon painted my fingers, white, gold, emerald green and

That night I remember feeling like catwoman, the Hella Berry version of course. I went from having doubts and worry about others to blocking that out. The Pink hair that made me

stick out. I received many complaints and gave me a smile from ear to ear. The shirt and skirt also gave an *hour-glass* figure as black would create the illusion of a *slimmer* look.



Chapter Nine ~ Sweet 18

It was October 19 2018 and I was on my way to celebrate turning 18 years old; I thought I would turn the night out. On our way to the lounge to celebrate were my friends at the time Nyasia, Zowie, and Mia. Nyasia was a childhood friend I had gone to middle school with and we were always going out together. Nyasia was Puerto Rican and while not all stereotypes of countries are true, she was the definition of Bronx Puerto Rican. She was loud, didn't know Spanish but understood it and just like her red hair she was a hot head. Zowie was also Puerto Rican and black she was 5 '4 and plus size model on the rise she was shy yet sassy. Lastly we had Mia while she was a recent friend; she was really known by Nyasia. She was 6ft tall, big smile and very high energy... SUPER annoyingly high energy, she was the girl who would start a showtime on the train and talk to strangers both of which I hated. While all of us were underage we made our way to the first spot Isla Cafe in Westchester . This was a restaurant that also served drinks and hookah; they had karaoke night. After we were done with Isla we then went to the hookah lounge called Blue Mist who only served hookah and had blue overhead lighting. They would pass a tablet around and let you pick the songs you wanted to listen to, this lounge was vibrant

While my first wore bodysuits, jeans and heels I wanted to show a little more. It was fall and it was 56 degrees out. I wore a mid cut pearl white plain dress with a deep V line cut that ran down to the middle of my chest. The center of the dress had three flipping overlay that were *stitched in at the waist* this dress modded to my body creating an hour-glass figure. The white dress sat 4 inches below my bottom. The dress was constructed out of cotton and elastic as I remember touching my thighs the roughness of the cotton. The dress was sleeveless and reminded me of tank top due to their style. As for my heels, they were rose gold pink and made with metallic stone. It was a pointed close toe shoe and was 5 inches, they were breathtakingly painful.

While getting ready I *brush* my teeth with toothpaste and baking soda. This removed any germs, creating a brighter *smile and fresh breath*. I shaved my legs with oatmeal shaving cream which *smoothed* my legs and created a shine. After I jumped out of the shower, I blow dried my hair. As I brush my hair down my curls dropped *modifying* their natural curly state and my hair fell straight down my back. I created a model part and *inserted* my H A P P Y B I R T H D A Y head band onto the sides of my head. I *inserted* my leggings into the *pre-shaped* all white underwear; added light pink glitter lip balm and was ready to go.

I felt like a white dove, free at least. The dress was short and white but I didn't feel like a marshmallow. I felt young, wild and free. The top of the dress was tight enough so I didn't have to worry about my chest falling out of the sleeve and long enough to sit down and have my underwear wouldn't show. At the end of the night my feet were in pain but so worth it.



Chapter Ten ~ That one night everyone talks about....

I hated prom, I never planned on going to prom until my friends planned an after party for me. I had grown into a friend group I was comfortable in it me, Zowie the up and coming model, Imani, and Narylan aka Nani. Imani was the shy type even more so than Zowie; she was a pretty 5'3 ft slim girl, with glasses and harlem street style. Narayan was my middle school friend and would do my make up. After my friend told me about throwing an after party I was more inclined to go, I hated my high school but after I would have something to look forward to. My prom was at Chelsea Pier and one week before prom I needed a dress. I told my mom Danis and my *tia* Blanca I changed my mind and we headed into a shop in Newark NJ. The small boutique sold formal dresses only after seeing long, short, bright, dark and all the dresses in between I found the one.

It was very non-traditional, as it was a pearly white mermaid dress that came in around the waist and flared out at the end. The dress was only long enough to cover my feet and when worn with heels would end just below the knee. The straps of the dress felt rough its the noodle sleeves were made of lace and elastic. The dress was embraced in silver metallic beads from the top of the dress to middle the silver beads created a seamless finish. The top of the dress was a sweetheart neckline. The dress had many layers, and more so at the ends of the dress the first layer that laid on top of my skin was satin, the layers in between the dress was polyester. The silver beading sat on top of this dress. For my purse I got a silver clutch that mimicked the silver lace on the dress. I wore a 7in open toe around point white heel. The shoe was faux leather white and with no design at all.

Before going to the salon I had dye my hair back to honey blonde. Modifying the color from a faded red to honey blonde only took a hour. The salon however *washed* my hair with shampoo removing any oils and dirty from the hair. They then conditions it to add *shine* and *texture*. After blow drying my hair and *intersecting* 2 tracks of human hair in the color 30 some *length* and *volume* was added to the hair. After a total of three hours I rush home where Nani was waiting for me. She added foundation to the skin removing the dark spots and acne bump this *transformed* my face to smooth flawless skin. She contoured around my nose and cheek to *enhance* my bone structure, and added a white seashell eyeshadow that was a light white that reflected purple and blue once the light touch it. She also did my eyebrows she didn't have my correct eye color so she shaded them in.

I liked my dress..... But not love. I felt awkward because I was already short and having the dress not cover my shoe completely made the dress feel cheap for me. While Nani did give