

Behind The Outfit, Here's The Story

Illustration by: Malik Lee

Prologue

This book was put together simply reflecting on some of the joys I've endured so far in my life, stories feature times I spent with those I hold very close to me adding specific details along with sketches to create a visual representation. Some would consider another a hoarder or a shopaholic choosing to keep hold of clothing items not understand the emotion as well as the sentimental value the items contain. As I constructed this book, I began to understand the piece in my closet are more than something I wear but a part of who I am.

Forward

For the past three to four years, I've known Malik to be someone whose confidence is extremely high. Malik takes pride in everything he does constantly giving his all into it putting him best foot forward, since knowing him I realized the amount of clothing items he has refusing to throw away but learning the value it holds to him. I don't blame him watching him progress into the man he's become shows how determined he is for success. "Behind the outfit, here's the story" explores Malik's most memorable outfits explaining to readers the reason for wearing along with making a personal connection to those who read.

Sheldon Brown

Prologue –	p. 3
Forward –	p. 4
Chapter One – Work For What You Want	p. 6
Chapter Two – The Famous Navy Bomber	p. 9
Chapter Three – The Petah Jay Collection	p. 12
Chapter Four – Work Work Work	p. 15
Chapter Five – Denim On Denim	p. 18
Chapter Six – Finally Legal	p. 21
Chapter Seven – Now We’re Looking Like Adults.....	p. 24
Chapter Eight – Off - White.....	p. 27
Chapter Nine – (*Attachment) Meet Here 7:00 Sharp!	p. 30
Chapter Ten – Comfortable In My Skin	p. 34
Chapter Eleven– Cozy!	p. 38
Chapter Twelve – Twentieth Birthday	p. 41
About The Author –	p. 46

Chapter One: WORK FOR WHAT YOU WANT!

Birthdays are supposed to be the most favorite part of the year to celebrate with friends along with family creating new memories. Your birthday is the time where you're able to dress and feel however you want without any sign of judgment. On September 15th, 2012, I turned 16 years old starting my sophomore phase in high school I couldn't be more excited to celebrate. This year I decide to spend time with my family eating dinner at Applebee's located 1360 Fulton Street, Brooklyn, NY, as a group we've picked to sit outside in their "dine out" section to enjoy the nice weather which was between 68 to 70 degrees.

To dinner I decided to wear an athletic long sleeve hockey jersey designed by the streetwear brand Stussy, the garment was in the color *black and white* with screen-printed designs along the front/back as well as the shoulders showcasing the brand's name followed by their logo and a number in the back underneath, I wore a plain white muscle fit t-shirt that *hugged* my body. To complete the look, I paired the jersey with slim fit *black* jeans that *wrapped* around my waist but not down my legs with one rip above my right knee purchased at the American Eagle store inside King's Plaza mall located at 5100 Kings Plaza, Brooklyn, NY combined well with the colors *black, white, and purple* basketball Nike sneakers designed by Charles Barkley.

The material of the jersey was mesh with a sheer; soft *texture* very lightweight on the body followed by a tight woven stitch to create the *structure* of the garment. Elastic ribbed fabric along the ends of the sleeve allowed the jersey to be *wrapped* tightly around my wrist. The garment was oversized causing the fabric to drape over my body thankfully hiding the weight I've gained during this time to where no one noticed the change. Since the jersey was created with mesh material fabric it was easy to wear during

Due to my young age, I couldn't work an actual job at the time, so it was a little difficult to get things for myself especially with my parents complaining about item prices being too high for them. In order to purchase

the jersey, I completed two quantitative focus research studies conducted by a company called Schlesinger inside there Manhattan location at 711 3rd Ave, New York, NY I was taught a lifetime lesson of working to get things I wanted in life with the help of participating in the focus studies. The following years after making this purchase, I held onto the jersey stored in my closet on a hanger reminding myself the steps I've taken to obtain it before deciding recently to give the garment away at the nears local thrift store Out Of The Closet on 475 Atlantic Ave, Brooklyn, NY.



Chapter Two: THE FAMOUS NAVY BOMBER

Graduating high school was one of the top five best moments of my life. Finishing high school was quite of a struggle for me due to personal reason such as family issues but I've made it happen graduating on time in June with my friends. Even though it's been 3 months later my family wanted to use my birthday as a time for celebrating my accomplishment with some friends and a couple of my classmates, I was excited to see the classmates that were invited to hang out since parting ways due to some planning to attend schools out of state while other became busy transitioning into our new lives.

Plans were set to dine-in at Red Lobster located at 5 Times Sq, New York, NY followed by Dave & Buster's down the street – 234 W 42nd St, New York, NY right after, instead of buying new items I chose to find something in my closet to save some money, with the weather transitioning from summer to fall it began to get chilly early. I wore my navy-blue high-top converse sneakers to go with these dark blue skinny fit jeans that *hugged* tightly around the calf of my legs I brought from American Eagle inside Kings Plaza Mall at 5100 Kings Plaza, Brooklyn, NY followed by a black t-shirt and bomber jacket I received as an early birthday gift from one of my older brothers at time lived in Los Angeles, California he seen at forever 21.

The bomber was a 100% polyester jacket in the color *navy-blue* with a *black* quilted patterned lining along the inside. The structure of the jacket was short along the waistline due to the *elasticized black* fabric used to *wrap* around the waist when closing the garment duplicated near the cuffs *gripping* the wrist area. The jacket fitted *snugged* to the body with *elastic* material alongside of the collar following *silver metal* buttons going downward on both sides *slipped* together to close the garment. In addition to the bomber accessories such as a *gold* linked watch *clasping* at the wrist complement a small *gold* roped chain with a small cross attached.

Besides spending time with family, I enjoyed being able to still connect to my high school friends I had the pleasure of spend 4 years with create a bond that's continuing to strive. Whenever I seen this *navy-blue*

bomber hung in my closet, I'd reminisce on how my brother was very thoughtful to purchase the jacket sending it almost 2,866 miles to make me happy from my birthday showing me no matter how far he was he'll always remember my special day and my big brother will forever be there for me.



Chapter Three: THE PETAH JAY COLLECTION

During this year social media platforms such as Tumblr as well as Instagram became very popular causing every person to create an account, these apps allowed users to showcase their talents whether it was for music, graphic design, styling, or clothing design. While scrolling on Instagram I came across a young black designer who went by the name Petah Jay, looking on his page there were multiple pictures of constructed jackets, t-shirts, pants, and dresses for women. During mid-August my aunt explained she wanted to buy a birthday gift for me but wasn't sure on what to get since I was in her words "picky", I told her about the designer Petah Jay as well as his designs followed by the garment, I liked the most from the collection which happen to be a *black* bomber jacket. Making the purchase of his website linked from his Instagram bio I waited two weeks for the item to come in.

Nothing was planned to go dine at a fancy restaurant or take a trip to an amusement park but just hang out with my friends the whole day. Once the jacket arrived, I was in awe with how neatly the garment was sown together impressed with the *smooth* texture of the fabric adding to the jacket with black *skinny fit* jeans purchases at Aeropostale located inside the local shopping mall Kings Plaza – 5100 Kings Plaza, Brooklyn, NY including a *white muscle fit* t-shirt from Aeropostale finishing the outfit off sporting *black and white high-top* converse sneakers. Later that evening I hung out all night up until about 3 am since it was the weekend on my friends stoop at 663 Sheffield Avenue, Brooklyn, NY.

When the bomber jacket arrived, I immediately ripped open the brown box to see the garment wrapped in *silver* tissue paper *tucked* in the corner of the box was a white handwritten card from the designer thanking me for making the purchase hoping I enjoy the garment. Taking the wrapping paper off I began to inspect the jacket. The item was 100% polyester with a quilted lining along the inside followed by *silver* colored *heat pressed* 3m reflective vinyl stickers randomly placed covering the front to the back with one pocket on each side another inside on the left and a zipper placed on the right arm sleeve as well as a zipper along the middle when zipped closing the jacket. The jacket fitted very *snugged* due to unsureness about sizing

I purchased a small when a medium would've have been best, the end of the jacket stopped directly above my waist when closed supported by the *elasticized* fabric. This garment *modified* my appearance near the cuffs *exposing my wrist* considering the sizing was off stating the obvious it was too small. Searching through my email I located the designer's contact information with hopes of being able to exchange the item for a larger size unfortunately with factors such as a no return or exchange policy my purchase was final.

Despite not being able to exchange the jacket for a smaller size I had to just keep what I purchased but that didn't stop me from sporting the jacket. When wearing the garment underneath I would put on a black sweater to blend in creating a façade of the structure to appear my size. Whenever I wore the jacket people would complement the design begging to know where I purchased it from boosting my confidence with the attention. I tried to hold onto the jacket for as long as I can before getting caught in the rain causing the reflective stickers to begin peeling off in the front, I was very excited to support a small business let alone a black fashion designer it made me feel good that I contributed by purchasing his product. Learning a valuable lesson from that day forward I still choose to support smaller businesses providing them with feedback on how to improve on things as well as making sure I read their return/exchange policies and their size charts.



Chapter Four: WORK WORK WORK

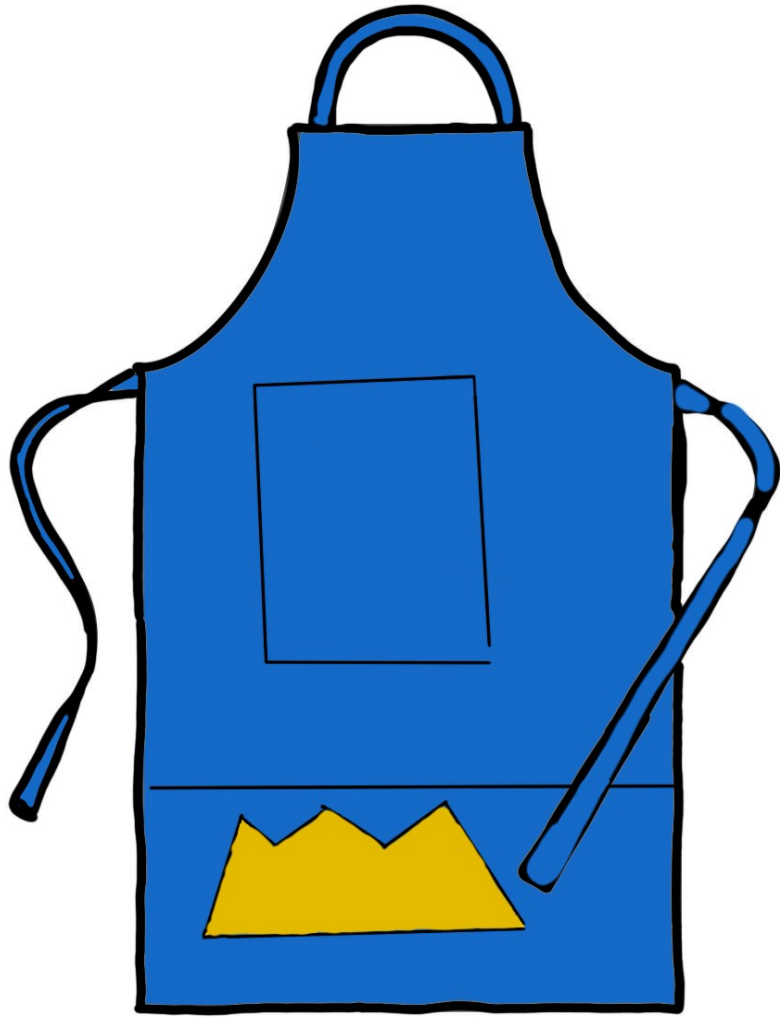
Making my own money had to be the best feeling in the world, I didn't have to check in with anyone about the purchases I made, how much money I was spending either. Working has taught me lessons as well like being conscious of timeframes for bill due dates. Since I began working one of my biggest responsibilities was to help at home buying groceries and assisting with the electric bill. Since I began working, I found joy in what I've done my current form of employment I am working for a nonprofit organization where I've been for the past six years servicing kids ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade teaching various subject including literacy, stem, and design I truly find enjoyment teaching my students contributing to the growth of their development creating long lasting bonds.

My first job at the age of 18 was working at Bath and Body Works as a stock associate at the Brooklyn location inside of Atlantic Terminal mall – 139 Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn, NY. At the store I was responsible for replenishing the sales floor making sure there was enough products stocked to replace what customers purchased besides that duty I oversaw maintaining the stock room located on the second floor of the mall reassuring the room was always clean as well as making sure product boxes were placed in the correct spot with the name showing making it easy for other associates to find if needed, sometimes when the store is short of staff I would work the sales floor assisting customers or the register. The company was a little strict with the appearance of their employees requiring everyone to be in unison dressed in a *white* long or short (depends on your preference) collared shirt, *blue* or *black* jeans completed by shoes, but for stock workers *black* sneakers were acceptable. On my birthday 19th birthday, I was scheduled to work a double shift starting at 8 am – 4 pm followed by a one-hour break resuming at 5 pm – 1pm.

Even though it was my birthday I still had the responsibility of reporting to work completing my daily duties. As a normal workday I slipped on my *blue* shoes by the brand Tom grabbing my *power blue* bib apron

wrapping one strap around my neck before tying the two straps on the side *tightly accentuating my waist* making the apron more *fitted* to my shape. Due to constantly moving I decided to wear *pre-shaped dark blue* jeans made from 93% cotton, 5 recycle cotton, 2 % elastane I purchased from American Eagle at their Brooklyn location 442 Fulton Street, Brooklyn, NY. The jeans were perfect for moving around bending my knees picking up boxes feeling the material *hug* my legs. Besides wearing uniform to work I was required to *modify my hair* getting it *cut, shaped, and trimmed* along with *my beard* every two weeks to keep a clean look. For my birthday my supervisor allowed me to draw on the *powder blue* apron a *yellow* crown outlined in black with sharpie markers to stand out from the other employees.

Not being able to hang out with my friends on my birthday was a little devastating stuck at work, but I made the best of it. Being able to decorate my apron can be viewed as form of a gift from my supervisors. After leaving the company due to a “staffing cuts” my supervisors allowed me to keep my apron where I was reminded of the good times, I spent at the workplace gaining new long-lasting relationship with strangers I got to know within a span of 2 years who I still have contact with keep up with one another on social media platforms reminiscing on the memories we’ve made together.



Chapter Five: DENIM ON DENIM

This year was very special to me showing how much people cared about me. Earlier in the year I've lost my first job after being there for two year and a couple of months due to 'over staffing' right before my birthday pushing me into a depressive state not being able hangout enjoy myself due to the financial loss. Being laid off a month before my birthday placed me in a negative space rejecting any form of celebration weather it was dinner or attending a party. At the time I felt no one cared about me or what I was going through, while having conversations with my cousins explaining my emotions about losing employment along with my then ruined birthday they've decided to sneak behind my back and create a separate group message in order to plan a surprise party for me at my home. After the party I've learned there was an entire itinerary planned with roles for everyone including where to take me for lunch as well as a specific time to get my hair cut and arrive to my house. With my one of my cousins attending the same high school as me she was familiar with my friends, utilizing social media such as Facebook a group page was made with a flyer giving details with the time, location and date allowing potential guest to check if they were attending or not.

Being that my birthday fell on a Thursday the event took place on Saturday, waking up that Saturday morning my mother made me breakfast then quickly urging me to take a shower and prepare myself for a haircut at Diva's Beauty Salon located at 7 Sutter Avenue, Brooklyn, NY where my barber conducts his business in the front of the shop. To prepare for my haircut I chose to wash/condition my hair while in the shower, letting it air dry before using leave-in conditioner enhancing the *texture* along with the *odor* from sweating followed by picking it out fluffing my roots displaying the *volume* my large afro had, I wanted to the barber to even the top of my hair making everything *proportionate* and *shaped*. After my haircut my mother and I hopped in a cab to our local mall to search for an outfit as well as eat lunch (looking back that was a smart move killing two birds with one stone), arriving at Kings Plaza Mall at 5100 Kings Plaza, Brooklyn, NY I instructed to go in any store I please pick things up, try them on with my time limit. The first store I stopped in was H&M browsing through shirts, jeans, jackets, and pants I saw nothing appealing, next we

headed to Zara where I see an *oversized dark grey crewneck sweater embroidered* with a peace symbol placed in the left upper corner. Due to not purchasing the sweater nothing else in the store was pleasing to me, giving up my mother decided to grab a bite to eat at the nearest pizza place Sbarro. While strolling to lunch my mother and I passed several window displays until I passed a mannequin wearing a denim outfit from the GAP.

Rushing into the store I quickly flagged down an associate to inquire about the location of the denim shirt and jeans along with the sizes available. Since my size was available in both pieces, I headed straight to the fitting room. I decided to try the jeans I picked up two different sizes thirty and thirty-two to see which fits better. The jeans were *pre-shaped skinny* fit 80% cotton, 13% polyester and 6% elastane with a rip directly above the left knee, *wrapped* around the ankles with a *brown* thread stitching along the seams front to back, between the two sizes the thirty fitted more *snug, gripping* my waist versus the thirty-two *draping* off my waist creating a baggy look. Due to the shirt being *muscle fit* I chose to try on the medium size so the shirt wouldn't be *tightly wrapped* pressing around my arms as well as around my wrist, the garment was 85% cotton, 15% polyester and 1% elastane followed by two pockets placed in the front with clear buttons down the middle to assist with the closure of the shirt plus on the cuffs.

This ensemble was my first time trying something *monochromatic* scoring perfectly with the blend between the blues finishing off the look with a pair of low top converse sneakers stopping at my ankle allow the jeans to sit right on top. This outfit was significant to me being in a venerable position where my back was against the wall not knowing what my next move will be. Wearing the outfit on this day allowed me to realize I will always have family by myself through my ups and downs, while at the party my body language was positive, and my confidence was at an all-time high enjoying the night feeling just as good as my outfit.



Chapter Six: FINALLY LEGAL

Turning 21 can be considered the best time of one's life. At the age of 21 the fun begins to start with wild nights in clubs, buying products legally etc., For my 21st birthday I knew I had to make the night epic and unforgettable what a "go hard or go home" mindset, planning one month ahead I mapped out a whole weekend to enjoy myself. With my birthday falling on a Friday, I booked a section at a popular night club Mazi located at 13035 91st Avenue, Queens, NY, that night which included free entry for my guest along with beverages and finger food, Saturday would consist of playing games at Dave & Busters at their Times Square location 234 W 42nd St, New York, NY, leaving Sunday for a day for brunch to just sit, relax followed by talking at a restaurant called Piquant at 259 Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn, NY. Already having outfits in mind for two out of the three events allowed me to just focus on the main one which was Friday at the nightclub, learning about the strict dress code for the party I began searching for appropriate items I can wear.

Searching the internet along with in store I checked my go to fast fashion stores H&M, Zara as well as Forever21 with no success on finding something I think was worthy of wearing for my big night. While scrolling down my timeline on social media I ran across an ad from ASOS a clothing brand based in the United Kingdom, deciding to browse their website I was met with many options. Due to the nightclubs strict dress policy I wanted to go for a formal casual and comfortable look, the restricts included upscale fashionable attire, collared shirts or dressy sweaters for men leaving footwear an open option. During my search on Asos I found the perfect short sleeved shirt that would not only look great on me but fit into the nightclub's rules, I quickly rushed placing the shirt into my cart then added my information to completing my purchase picking the express two-to-four-day shipping option.

After waiting about six business days the shirt finally arrived, ripping the package open like a savage I hoped the shirt was a perfect fit with it only being a couple days left until my birthday. The shirt was a *mustard yellow* color which is an equal blend between red and yellow, I made the choice to go a size up getting a

medium due to the shirt being muscle fit with the fear of feeling uncomfortable. The shirt was 97% cotton along with 3% elastane resistant to wrinkling and easy to iron, *mustard* buttons down the middle blended in to assist with the closure of the shirt plus at the top near the collar. When I tried on the shirt the material was so *soft* similar to a blanket, since the garment was muscle fit the short sleeves *wrapped tightly* around my biceps *modifying* the *appearance* making my arms appear more muscular than it really was. Once the shirt was fully buttoned my physique was more slimmed *enhancing* the frame of my body, in addition to the shirt I wore black skinny jeans with a few rips that stopped right at my ankle on top of my pair of Stan Smith Adidas in the color White followed by *gold* accessories such as a chain that *suspended* a cross, bracelet and an earring freshly *pierced*.

I can vividly remember how I felt wearing this outfit with help from the shirt my confidence was through the roof the entire night I received complements on how the garment blended in with my skin tone even of the shirt just fits me so well. The whole night couldn't be any more perfect enjoying a good time with my friend along with a couple of my family members partying throughout the night with nothing but great vibes all around. To this day I still have the shirt hanging up in my closet with the rest of my button up shirts and casual sweaters since that day I haven't worn the shirt again I'm not sure if it will still fit due to weight gain.



Chapter Seven: NOW WE'RE LOOKING LIKE ADULTS

When one enters their 20s changes begin to happen forcing you to become more mature. Even though in your 20s it's the time you party making all kinds of mistakes but a time for growth, gaining more confidence in yourself, taking more risk that maybe beneficial and turning weaknesses into strengths. This year of my life I made changes to better myself, since graduating school back in 2014 I chose not to rush quickly into college without knowing exactly my career choice was going to be. To filling the void of not being in school I picked up two jobs working constantly until I figured out what would be my next move. For my birthday this year I wanted to take a break from hitting nightclubs spending the whole night out doing something more mature and adult like.

This year my friends and I tossed ideas back and forth on what we should do being that the weather is usually nice around my birthday we wanted something outdoors with a nice view where we're able to relax enjoying each other's company. While doing research we came the agreement of visiting a wine vineyard where we can act bougee tapping into our fancy mindset browsing various websites together we came across Benmarl Winery located about 90 minutes from outside New York at 156 Highland Avenue, Marlboro, Ny which was amazing in terms of traveling. For transportation we investigated renting a party bus that will take us to our destination then back home at an affordable price we found a company recommended from a friend who shared their experience with the company rating them 5 stars. Once everything was mapped out with pricing one of my friends created a flyer with details about the event along with the dress code casual and formal. Per usual I think of my outfit looking at inspiration from the social media platform Pinterest I begin to do my in-store search visiting the go to store H&M, Zara and forever21 with no success with still enough time I thought to maybe order something deciding to check out Asos I found a long sleeved shirt that would fitted into the look I was trying to go with, I quickly placed the into my cart adding my information to competing my purchase. In addition to the shirt, I ordered a pair of black trousers to wear with the shirt followed by Stan Smith Adidas.

Once the shirt arrived, I tried it on hoping it would fit fine, with the shirt being regular fit I ordered my original size a small. The garment was in the color *white* to have a clean-cut look, clear buttons ran down the middle in the front to close the shirt as well as on the wrist to assist with the cuff and at the top middle on the collar, the shirt was 65% polyester followed by 35% cotton the texture was very soft and light weight. Since the shirt was regular fit, the sleeves didn't *wrap* around my arms *tightly* but a little more *loosely* unlike the muscle fit that I was used to wearing didn't *hug* my physique or *modify* my appearance too much. Unlike a regular men's shirt this one didn't have a traditional collar, different from a traditional wing collar this one was a small band *wrapping* around like the original collar was detached. The black pants were skinny fit similar to a tuxedo suit pants in the size 31 perfectly *hugging* my waist made out of 100% polyester with a *jacquard interwoven pattern* *modifying* the appearance of my legs appearing to be more muscular, sitting directly at my ankles right on top of the sneaker.

With me still being in my early 20s I wanted to make changes to the way I act along with how I think with the urgency of become a more responsible adult. The shirt holds a place in my "greatest outfit of all time" book due to the fact of how matured and sophisticated I looked enjoying my special day with my friends. I still have this garment in my closet I'm afraid to let go, the shirt was so perfect on me in my opinion deciding to wear it to my cousin's wedding later in that year and again for my birthday the next year, I gave the pants away at my nearest local thrift store Out Of The Closet on 475 Atlantic Ave, Brooklyn, NY since I couldn't fit them anymore.



Chapter Eight: Off-White

The late Virgil Abloh is one my favorite streetwear designers helping shape the culture, with associates in the music industry Virgil was able to push his brand all overreaching a wide range of consumers. The help from social media platform Tumblr showcased fashion photography pictures of brands such as Tisa, Don C snapback hats and Abloh's brand Pyrex, the brand produced various items including sweaters, hoodies, t-shirts as well as sweatpants. Since then, I've watched Abloh flourish into the creative designer he was before passing away becoming the artistic director for Louis Vuitton's menswear collection in 2018 while having his successful brand off-White.

With my 23rd birthday quickly approaching I wanted to get myself a gift for the things I've accomplished such as enrolling myself in school, I sat down one morning before heading to work researching school that offered fashion programs, I knew I wanted a career in the fashion industry but didn't know the steps to take. After mapping everything out I chose to attend New York City College of Technology located 300 Jay Street, Brooklyn, NY enrolling in their business and technology of fashion program to pursue my bachelor's degree. To celebrate my cousin along with a few of my friends found a day brunch party for my birthday called Il Bastardo at 544 W 27th street, New York, NY featuring all you can drink during the weekends and amazing food since my birthday fell on Sunday this was the best place to visit. Thinking of ideas on an outfit I scrolled countless on Instagram seeing a yellow industrial belt with the words 'Off-White' written on it, but it was until my brother walked inside our home wearing the belt, I noticed it was designed Virgil Abloh. Being a fan of Abloh's previous work I figured this would be a good gift to myself going on the internet I searched multiple rerailling store to find the belt sold out except for one place Barney's New York.

Sunday morning, I started calling all the Barney stores in New York city I finally was able to get in contact with their Brooklyn location to see if an associate can up the belt on hold for me to pick up. Traveling by train I arrived at 192 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, NY requesting to speak to the stock manager Kevin I spoke

to on the phone when he came out of the room, I told him my name he automatically knew what I was there for. The worker Kevin explained he place the belt at the register for me making it easy for me to be n and out the store in a fast pace the purchasing the belt the cashier place it inside a grey dust bag, Since the belt only came in two colors *black* and *yellow*, I decided to purchase the *yellow* due to the fact it was lighter along with yellow being my favorite color. While being in downtown Brooklyn I went to H&M to find a last-minute pair of pants to complete my outfit, wearing the granddad collared shirt from the previous year I thought it would be a good way to wear something I already had in order to save money. After finding pants I headed on the subway to go home to get ready with a few hours to spare, arriving home I tried on the garments to see how they'll blend the pants were *black plaid skinny fit* in the size 30 with the shell being 70% Rayon, 2 % spandex followed by the lining 91% polyester and 9% cotton the trousers were a perfect fit sitting on my waist without falling *hugging* my legs *modifying* the appearance to be view more *muscular* than it really was , the shirt fitted exactly like the previous year along with the sneakers. Lastly the belt was made from 60 % of polyamide plus 40 % polyester with the length of 200 centimeters, not know how long the belt turned out to be I was able to *wrap* it around through the loops of the pants twice which made the belt become very *tight* on my waist. I styled the belt by *wrapping* it once around my waist then folding the rest of the belt on my side creating a loop running the other end inside to make the belt *suspend* from the side of my hip showing off the brand's name and logo.

Seeing the creative talent Virgil had for his craft became an inspiration to many young designers or even those who take fashion seriously for me it was the hard work and dedication it took for him to build his brands along with leaving a long-lasting legacy. In my opinion Virgil was one of the best visionaries in fashion allowing consumers to view it as more than just fashion but a way of life. This belt is very significant to me because it allows me to wonder about the legacy I would like to leave behind when my life's journey is complete, recently my oldest brother and I visited the "Figures of Speech" exhibit in Brooklyn Museum at 200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY that included designs and sculptures from Virgil coincidentally both of wore the same Off-White belt which so happened to be on display.



Chapter Nine: (*ATTACHMENT) MEET HERE 7:30 SHARP!

Growing up with nine older siblings was a lot of fun always having someone around to play with or go to the park, I absolutely loved spending time with my sister singing, dancing learning how to cheat during connect four or uno but being with my older brothers I found the most joy doing manly activities that ended up with me being punished such as hopping over gates, playing street basketball with a crate *cut* out near the bottom used as the hoop *adhere tightly* around the tree so it will stay in place and playing football in the field. January 25,2020, I received a devastating phone call from a close friend informing my brother was involved in a car accident and there was rumor circulating he's passed, confirming the news with my father I was able to find out where his body was held. Driving to another borough in pouring raining mixed with snow weather arriving at North Shore University Hospital – 300 Community Dr, Manhasset, NY founding out the rumor told to me was in fact true and my beloved brother was gone. Two months after his death I wanted to honor his life by modifying *my forearm* getting a tribute *tattoo embedded into my skin*, with his nickname being seven I decided to get the number with a halo surrounding the top along with angel wing on the sides, his name, birthday followed by his death date in *black ink* making the *tattoo* bold and able to stand out on my brown skin. Throughout the entire year I was not in any mood to hang out with friends attending social events having a fear I'll become heavily intoxicated crying my eyes out in the corner somewhere.

For my 24th birthday this year my partner knew how down and depressed I've been he decided to surprise me with dinner in the city. The day of my birthday it was a warm day around 70 degrees with having class in the afternoon I decided to get a haircut a few hours before heading to school. Similar to previous years I prepared for my haircut by washing/conditioning my hair while in the shower, letting it air dry before using leave-in conditioner enhancing the *texture* along with the *odor* from sweating followed by picking it out fluffing my roots displaying the *volume* of my hair in order to allow my barber to even my hair making strands the same level. I arrived at Diva's Beauty Salon located at 7 Sutter Avenue, Brooklyn, NY around twelve-thirty pm where my barber conducts his business in the front of the shop, while getting my haircut I received a text

message stating “MEET ME HERE 7:00 SHARP” followed by the directions to a restaurant. After getting my haircut I rushed to the subway across the street heading downtown Brooklyn for class at New York City College of Technology starting at two pm ending at four-thirty, once class was over, I didn’t have much time to run around to different stores I checked out H&M to at least look for a pair of jeans to match a pullover sweater I have at home.

When I arrived back home, I was left with only an hour to get myself ready which including showering, styling my hair, my facewash routine and making sure all my essential items are together such as my phone, keys along with my wallet. After taking my shower I began to apply lotion with a hint of oil to my skin keeping the layers hydrated with a shiny appearance throughout the day, following the application of lotion I lightly sprayed my favorite cologne Sauvage by Dior to my skin enhancing my scent allowing it to linger for a long period of time. The jeans I purchased from H&M were *pre-shaped* skinny fit light blue with a medium wash towards the bottom starting under the knee along the shin ending at the ankle with a rip on the left side exposing my entire knee, with the size being a 30 the jeans were able to sit perfectly *hugging* around my waist without the use of a belt, but I decided to still wear one. To complement the jeans, I worn pull over long sleeve crewneck sweatshirt from the streetwear brand Fear of God that I purchased from Pacsun a month ago, the sweatshirt was a dark oatmeal grey color with an oversized fit that *modified* my torso area to have a boxy look. The sweatshirt was 80% cotton as well as 20% polyester featuring a ribbed knit collar that slightly *wrapped* around my neck, ribbed knit cuffs that *gripped* around my wrist including on the waist hem, beside these details the garment featured a stitched rubber Fear Of God label in the upper back near the neck line followed by the word "ESSENTIALS FEAR OF GOD" on the upper left of the front and going across horizontally in the back both graphics in the color black with a velvety texture. To finish the outfit, I decided to wear a pair of retro Air Jordan 1 sneakers which is a blend of white leather alongside brown suede followed by the regular Jordan silhouette and an oversized backward-facing Nike swoosh on the lateral side in the high style allowing the jeans to stack onto of the sneaker.

This ensemble is memorable to me due losing my brother falling in a state of depression while mourning the loss, allowing someone to take my mind off things keeping my mental state strong but losing someone very close to you takes a huge toll. What makes the outfit special was that someone put my needs before theirs to make me feel better despite what I was going through, the oversized crewneck sweatshirt was my favorite piece from this outfit which is the oatmeal color but more so because of the oversized fit, I like wearing oversized sweatshirts or hoodies simply because of the movement freedom not worrying about the garment being too tight on me. However, when I look at the sweatshirt hanging my closet, I'm reminded of that night of my birthday being able to put my troubles to the side and finally relax and relax my mind, I believe certain people are placed in our lives to bring pure joy and happiness.



Chapter Ten: COMFORTABLE IN MY SKIN

During my teenage years I was very self-conscious person I constantly worried about what other would think of me, I used to walk around with a sense of shame as well as embarrassment when I approached a certain situation or interactions. Being uncomfortable in my skin I searched for approval from others resulting in rejection for a while I struggled with being comfortable with various aspects of myself from my looks, features and even my sexuality. The more I've gotten older I began to worry less about what other may think of me deciding to enjoy the one life I've been given; it took me some time to start loving myself the way I do now.

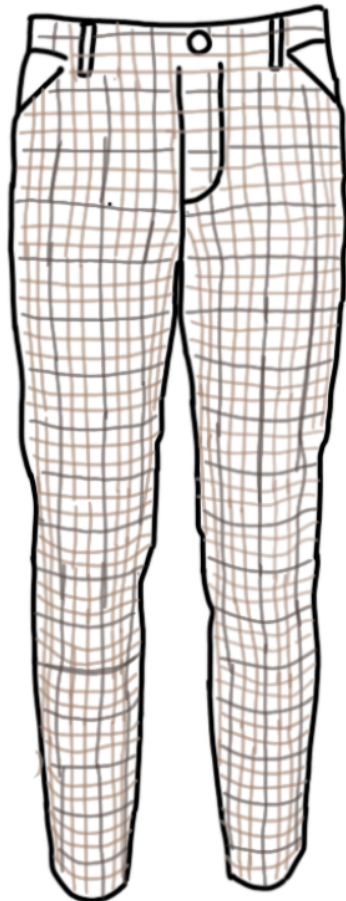
Turning 25 I wanted to do something out of the ordinary where I feel comfortable around people like myself enjoying music as well as great food being that my birthday fell on a Wednesday, I felt it was best to celebrate during the weekend. Doing a little bit of research, my friends and I came across a social media account for this restaurant called Lips located at 227 E 56th St, New York, NY that offer a dinner drag show, a drag show is entertainment performed by artist impersonating women that involves lip-syncing and dancing followed by skits with a little comedy in order to attend the show we first had to make a reservation to secure our spot. After setting up reservation for Saturday night at 8:30 pm I began to look for an outfit during the evening, per usual I decided to catch the subway heading downtown Brooklyn making H&M my first stop. Browsing through the men's section I discovered a short sleeve white polo shirt from then I began to create ideas that will blend well with the shirt, having no success I still purchased the shirt before running down the train station steps to catch the express 4 train heading uptown towards Manhattan. Arriving at the Grand Central station I began to walk up East 42nd street towards 5th avenue where the store Zara is place on the corner, after I was greeted by an associate, I went straight up the escalator to the men's section on the second floor I laid eyes on a pair of pants without any hesitation I grabbed the size I felt was best for me and headed to the register.

Before arriving to my house, I sent my barber a text message asking if it was a possibility he can squeeze me his schedule for a quick haircut, different from my previous haircut I didn't have to perform any preparations since I'll be only getting a shape up. During the haircut my barber sprayed the edges of my hair

with holding gel before cutting. In between the cut I kept looking in the mirror to see the progress, while looking I noticed my barber did modifications to my sideburn by *cutting* the hair into a fade which blended into my beard changing the appearance to be viewed as the two being connected. Straight after the haircut I had about two hours to get ready, once inside my home I began to lay out the garments on my bed right before jumping in the shower I quickly grabbed my Bath & Body Works Noir shower gel that would enhance and *modify* the *odor* of my body follow by combining with matching body cream to allow the duo to leave an lingering scent of blended black cardamom, smoky vanilla with a hit of musk on my skin throughout of the night. Once out the shower I began to get dress, first I put on a plain white tee shirt under the polo shirt to provide an extra layer of protection in case I sweat it wouldn't seep through the shirt. The garment was in the color white short sleeved with 3 clear buttons to assist with the closure near the collar I made the choice to go a size up by purchasing a medium due to the shirt being muscle fit to ensure comfortability, the shirt was 97% polyester along with 3% elastane. When putting it on the texture was very soft similar to jersey cotton sheets, the material was light weight, since the shirt had 3% elastane the end of the sleeve *wrapped tightly* around my biceps squeezing the muscle *modifying the appearance* making my arms to be viewed as bigger than what they really are, the bottom of the shirt *draped* down to my waist even with the fit so I decided to *tuck* it into the trousers. The pants I purchased from Zara were *pre-shaped* slim-fit grey with a checked plaid in a size 30 with assistance from the hook and eye fastener the trousers were able to fit perfectly *hugging* my waist without needing a belt like any pair of pants 2 pockets along the side as well as 2 in the back was featured followed by a zip fly. The trousers were constructed by 61 % polyester, 36% rayon, 3% spandex as a shell while the lining contained 80% polyester and 20% cotton with the slim fit the pants *clutched* from my waist to my thighs but *lessened* up from the top of my knees to down causing the legs of the pant to flow over my footwear which was a pair of stan smith Adidas in the color white ,I finished the look with no jewelry beside sporting apple watch with a black band.

This outfit has to be my most favorite to wear simply due to the fact I was enter a place of self-discovery learn about myself. The night at Lips was an amazing experience being around people who were just like me

life their life freely without any worries, the food was delightful, but the drag show outshined everything. The performances were overly entertaining with dancing including acrobatic moves, the highlight of the night was being pulled on stage to lip sync with one of the performers to dreams by Fleetwood mac which happens to be my favorite song. Being in a comfortable atmosphere allowed to feel more confident in the person I am as well as the person I'm becoming.



Chapter Eleven: COZY!

Now at the current age of 26 I've been experiencing changes that baffle me such as feeling tired around 10 pm struggling to stay up past 11:30 pm versus being 21 partying all night coming home in the early hours of the morning. Throughout the years I'm able to reflect on where I am at in my life along with where I'm going as I get older; I realize mistakes are lessons allowing me to know what needs to be changed in the future to get the result I desire. I've been blessed to meet people who have an influence paired with experience that impacted on how I shaped to the person I am today, I'm extremely grateful for all my accomplishments so far in my life especially with my education and my personal development. Since the sudden passing of my brother, I noticed how short life can be not knowing what is next to come one should celebrate every moment no matter how small or big surrounded by only love.

To celebrate my new age this year I wanted to do something intimate with my small group of friends just to lounge around listening to music, talking, and enjoying each other's company. For some time, we had an idea of purchasing an Airbnb to sleep over play games, do some catching up and eat food one of the rules we've created was to bring a pair of fresh pajamas. The entire month of August was used to finding the perfect place along with planning out a full itinerary with details on activities as well as the type of food being provided, once we came to an agreement on the arrangements I was on the hunt for pajamas. While searching online I browsed through many sites such as my go-to place H&M to find onesies with various graphics I then I thought to check out Fashion Nova where I found a pajama set featuring long sleeved shirt with matching pants, unsure about which size to get I went with my gut choosing a small I quickly placed the into my cart adding other items before my information to completing my purchase and receive express two-to-four-day shipping option. After ordering my outfit I proceeded to book a haircut appointment with my barber through an app called "The Cut", since my barber in my opinion is the best, he's very popular making it very to book an appointment.

Once the set arrived, I quickly tried it on to make sure it was a good fit, trying on the shirt first noticing there was a large tear starting from the right shoulder down to the elbow with being upset about the rip I decided to keep the garment, it was regular fit which I didn't see while purchasing good thing I ordered my original size a small. The garment was in the color *emerald* with a *black* lining along the edges of the collar and cuffs. Black buttons ran down the middle in the front to help with the closure shirt as well as on the wrist to assist with the cuff there wasn't a button at the not leaving the collar to stay flipped open with two pockets on the front, the shirt was 97% polyester followed by 3% mulberry silk the texture was very smooth and light weight. Since the shirt was regular fit, the sleeves didn't *wrap* around my arms *tightly* but a little more *loosely* unlike fitted garments I've worn before. The matching pants didn't have any buttons let alone a fly, similar to the shirt along the side there was a black lining 97% polyester followed by 3% spandex the pants featured an elastic waist with a draw string including two side hand pockets and a back pocket. The pants fit perfectly *gripping* around my waist without tying the draw string the only issue I had was with the length of the leg, the leg gave off a taper style not reaching to my ankle I decided to perform alterations by cutting the fabric starting from the lower half of my thighs *modifying* the pants to create shorts sewing the excess fabric, with the alterations I was able to *modify* the appearance of my leg due to sewing the fabric a little tight making the short fit extremely tight.

This ensemble was special to me because it shows that even when things aren't going the way I imagine I'll still would be able to make it work quickly thinking to use my entry level sewing skills. In my opinion when one becomes up in age the mind figure things out more effectively, the younger me probably would've cancelled plans simply because there was defect in the outfit not wanting to do anything for my birthday. Due to this situation combined with my new age I tend to look at things from a different perspective with a "how can I change this for a more positive result" outlook, lately I've been reflecting on my past behaviors along with the way I use to react to things that were completely out of my control.



Chapter Twelve: COZY! 2.0

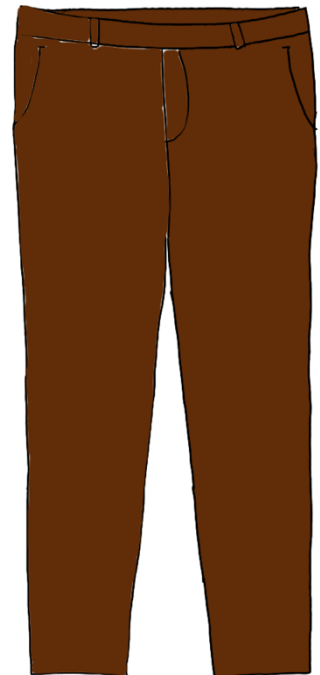
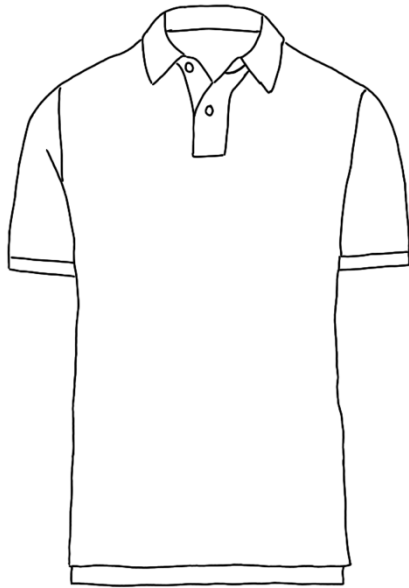
Growing up I found it very hard to accept things for other people if it was asking for help or just receiving things. I figured I felt this way due to not wanting someone to feel as if I need them or I have to depend on them, I've always somewhat been independent from working since the age of 17 my parents installed a "get it done on your own" mentality I've always done thing for people out of the kindness of my heart whether it was giving money, clothes or support. Now I've realized people do things for others as an act of service or simply out of love wanting nothing back in return going above and beyond, I used to wonder would I ever get the same in return or just be known as the person who just gives.

Besides having the pajama sleep over with my friends, I received a text from my partner similar to the prior year's stating "I hope you're enjoying the sleep over when you get home, I left a note on your bed with three bags in the closet" causing me to become anxious and rush home. Once I got home, I began to read the handwritten note explaining I had two different outfits for Saturday night and Sunday in separate labeled bags placed in the close along with a pair of sneakers as well as instructions on where to meet him for only Saturday which I found a little odd. Starting with Saturday I was instructed to meet him at a restaurant called Sei Less located on 156 W 38th st, New York, NY at 8:30 pm, my outfit for this day was a shacket which is a blend of a shirt combined with a jacket, a pair of dress pants and a polo shirt, once dinner was over he purchased two tickets for us to attend a sip n paint held by the company Paint N Pour at their lower east side location 53 Delancey st, New York, NY where we were able to listen to music, sip a little while creating a master piece at the same time. Sunday morning, we decided on doing breakfast with my mother at my favorite bunch place Piquant located at 259 Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn, NY before heading back home resting up for the next surprise. After our naps I was told he booked a lane at Frames bowling alley lounge at 550 9th Avenue, New York, Ny so I should look at the second outfit, once I went through the bag, I pulled out a pair of shorts, the sneakers, and a graphic t-shirt.

Starting with my outfit for Saturday the polo shirt was in the color white with short sleeves from H&M followed by 3 clear buttons to assist with the closure near the collar my partner made the choice to purchase a medium due to the shirt being muscle fit just the others in the past to ensure my comfortability, the shirt was 97% polyester along with 3% elastane with light weight material and a soft texture the end of the sleeves *wrapped tightly* around my biceps squeezing the muscle *modifying the appearance* making my arms to be viewed as bigger. The pants were in the color brown but more of a chocolate brown from the company express, the pants were skinny fit causing the material to *grip* along my waist as well as my thighs made out of 98% cotton and 2% elastane the leg of the pants fitted *tightly modifying* the appearance making my legs view as being more muscular. My partner added more items my look with the long sleeved shacket made of 66% polyester, 22% cotton and 12% rayon in the color black featuring a collar, front fasteners as well as on the chest pockets, cuffs, and a straight-cut hem finishing off with a pair of white Stan Smith Adidas sneakers. For Sunday the shirt I worn was by the streetwear brand G-Star that had an oversized fit in the color black with a round neck, short sleeves, a straight hem, and a graphic in the front with the brands name in white. The shirt was made with 100% cotton resulting in a soft supple texture similar to jersey cotton, since the garments was oversized, my partner purchased a size small which *modified* the appearance of my body causing me to have a boxy look with the sleeves *dropping* over my arms verses the tight fit from the polo shirt. To compliment the shirt there were a pair of shorts in the size small made out of 100% polyester with a mesh texture displaying a 3 graphics in the front two lightning bolts one of each side followed by the company's logo on the right. The shorts fitter very *snug hugging* my thighs *tightly* the garment *modified* the appearance of height allowing me to seem a little since the shorts were cut very shortly with a 7-inch inseam resulting in exposing my entire thighs, finishing off with a pair of black and white low cut Nike dunks known as panda dunks lows.

This ensemble means a lot to me because it was the first time, I've had someone go out their way for me like that. My partner shocked me paying close attention to the way I dress along with my style down to details like my sizing, this act of service shown that I can put trust into him to make sure I continue to look my best. In a relationship he's has shown me its ok to have someone to do nice things for the next whether they ask for it as

which can improve the intimacy in the relationship keeping our time together strong and very lasting. Since the day I've met him, I was treated with the upmost respect being able to vent when I need it from not losing my mind keeping me afloat continuing to grow and elevate with one another creating an unbreakable foundation. My partner he pushes me to be more positive than I was the day before helping me become more creative each day contributing to my personal growth with my education and the young professional I strive to be.





About The Author



Malik Lee is a young author born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. He found his love for fashion as a teenager by participating in fashion shows during high school years along with his obsession to streetwear helped influence his love for visual merchandising. Currently Malik attends New York City College of Technology majoring in the Business and Technology of Fashion program as a senior where he would obtain his baccalaureate degree with the hopes of landing a job as a visual merchandiser.