

Adventures, Memories, and What I Wore



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prologue

All of the stories written in this book are based on real life events and memories of my life. Dress has been a part of who I am since I was a child due to all of the dresses my mother bought me throughout my childhood. It carried onto me throughout my teenage years and throughout my newly adult life. I've always been interested in the styling of clothing and looking good in order to feel good. Throughout my teenage years I've used dress as a way of self-expression as well as a way to make myself feel confident. I also love using clothes as a way of motivation by using bright colors for working out, warmed weather and to brighten up my days. Dress will always play a huge part in my life and I hope to one day create my own brand and with this have others feel confident and comfortable as I do.

forward

Sheila has always been the one to come to family events dressed up or with her makeup done. Even if we are having a casual family dinner, she will come with one of her best outfits on. Most of the time where we see her dress nicer, and formal are during family events. Our family is big and so there is always a family event going on and that is where she will come in with a new outfit. She's always been very outgoing and unique in her sense of style and dress. Since she is one of my cousins who is closer in age to me, we always find ourselves asking each other what looks good and what does not. Most of the times when we buy new clothing, we tend to do clothing hauls and put on different outfits as a way to have fun and pass time. This is one of our favorite things to do whenever we reunite.

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my third birthday

Something not a lot of people know about me is that my parents took me to live in Mexico a few months after I was born here in New York. I lived with my grandparents, my aunts and my mother while my father was living and working in the US. I was the first grandchild born into my family on both my mother and fathers' side so when it was September 18, 2002, they

planned a big birthday celebration for my birthday. Since I was so young, I don't remember much so I only have photos and videos to look back on.

In the photos I have of me at my birthday party I have on a big white dress while standing by my cake. My dress was a white two strap dress with an A-line chiffon skirt and floral details on both straps. It had some sort of shoulder detailing that looked like shoulder pads but with flowers and beaded details on both sides. It also had detailing on the bodice and waistline that formed a “V” like line that flowed into the skirt. The skirt was made out of chiffon and has a satin hemline all around the bottom of the dress.

From the videos I saw of this day I can tell I was happy and that I loved wearing my dress. This was the last birthday party celebration I had in Mexico along with my family who lived there. The following year I had to return to the US so I could start going to school and so looking at the photos I have from this day makes me feel a rollercoaster of emotions. It makes me feel happy yet at the same time sad since I know I could never experience that day again nor fully remember it.



pink high heels

August 2014, it was a hot summer day in New York City with the sun at its highest point and a warm breeze. It was the day of my aunt's wedding and we were at Brooklyn Bridge Park taking photos for her wedding album.

I wore a light pink chiffon dress with a sweetheart neckline and jewels at the waist and up the bust in a form of a line. I had it altered to fit me just above the knee since I thought it looked odd on me if it was longer since I was pretty short. With it, I wore pink high heels which made me taller but oh my did they hurt my feet. We walked throughout the whole park and stopped at certain points for photos, and I couldn't help but wish we'd go back to the car. Thankfully, I sat by the steps near Jane's Carousel long enough to give my feet some rest.

It had been years since I've seen my aunt, so I knew I had to wear something special, even if it meant being uncomfortable for a few hours. My aunt was one of the people who would take care of me when I was a child. I lived with her for years before I turned 4 and seeing her get married was something that made me feel blissful.

After a while, we headed back to the car and as I sat in the back, I thought to myself, let me take off my shoes.



not a quinceañera

Growing up in a Mexican household, I was always asked about having a quinceañera or sweet 15 by my relatives, since it is considered tradition to have one. A quinceañera represents a young girl becoming a young woman and it is celebrated with a mass and a party afterwards.

I turned fifteen on September 18, 2014, except I did not have a quinceañera. I grew up being a really shy kid so the thought of being the center of attention for a whole day scared me at the time. I did end up having a small celebration with some of my family members a few days after my actual birthday.

American Apparel was a popular brand during this year and so I ended up wearing a dress I brought from there. It was a short halter skater dress that tied around the neck, which created an open back and the bottom was flowy. The dress had palm leaf pattern all over with dark and light greens as well as some pop of turquoise, which made me look tanner than I was. My hair was really long and wavy which made me feel like a mermaid.

Although I did not get to have a big quinceañera party and choreographed dances, I did enjoy the way I spent that day. After all, the cake was good, and I did get my “last doll” which is what someone usually gifts the quinceañera as a way to say goodbye childhood.



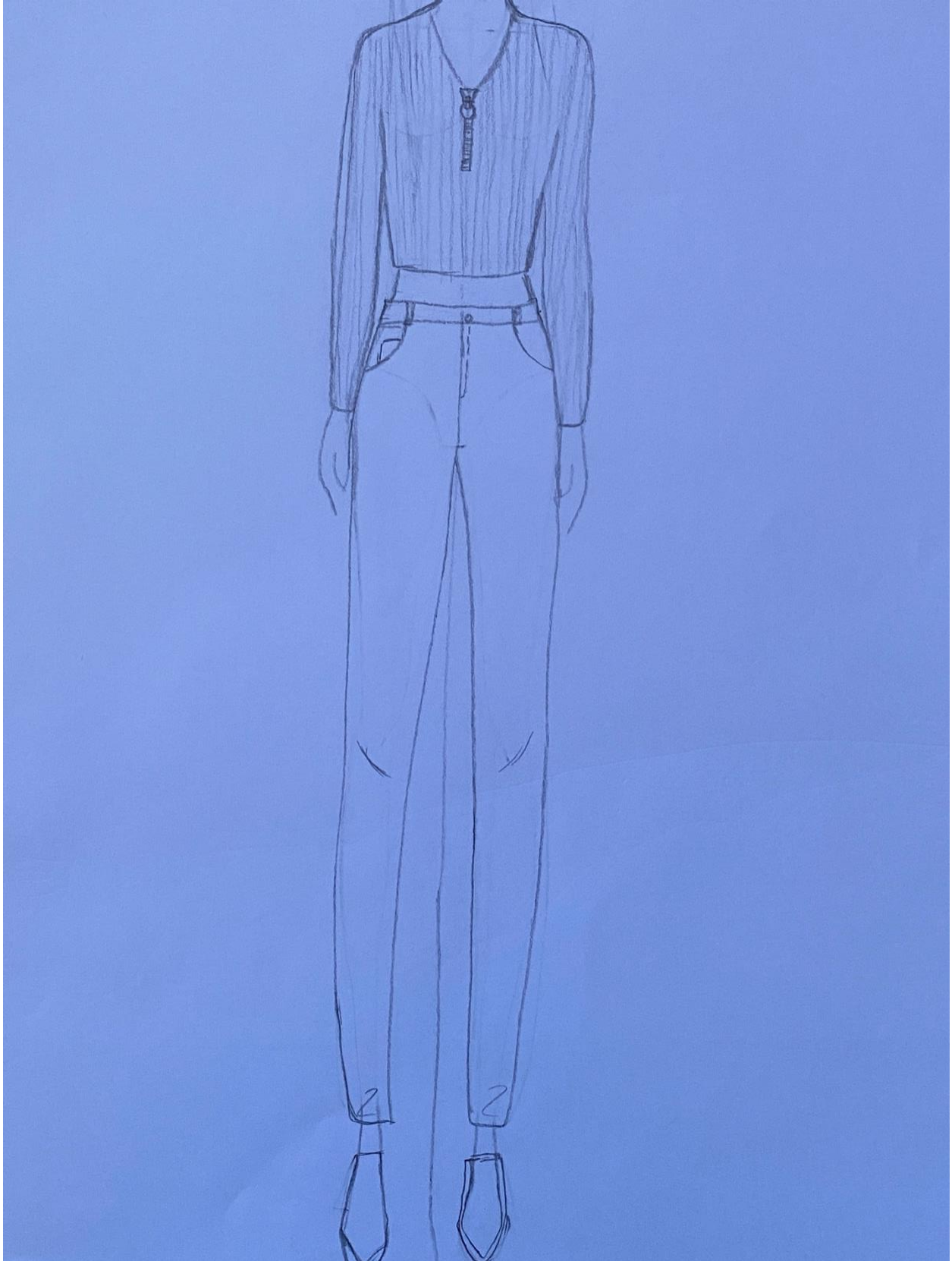
the bouquet of roses

It was that time of the year and no, not Christmas, Valentine's day. This day in high school is one of the most important days, if you have a boyfriend, but if not, then this is like any other day. In my world, I didn't have one, but I didn't hate Valentine's day, in fact I loved it.

This day I wore a red long sleeve ribbed shirt with a zipper detailing in the middle front paired with my light denim skinny jeans and brown boots. I also wore my black jacket and black velvet choker. I wore my hair down, as I did every day and was having a great day until, a bouquet of roses was sitting on my desk during fourth period English class.

I am not the type of person who is into gestures like this one and so it made me feel anxious, surprised and simply weird inside. What was I going to say to my father who doesn't let me date? My mother was going to tell the whole family, this is going to be a topic of conversation at the next family event, my thoughts were flooded.

I ended up taking the flowers home and every time I think about that day or even what I wore, I feel a weird sensation in my stomach as I am right now.



prom day

At last, it was one of the most anticipated days of senior year, prom day. It took place June 7, 2017 and it started around 7 P.M. Prom day was special, it was a celebration with your graduating class on completing high school and it was also the last prom we would attend. The venue was in Queens at the Astoria World Manor located at 25-22 Astoria Blvd.

Attending prom was a last-minute decision so I had to look for a prom dress and some new heels as soon as possible. My mother and I would go to the Macy's at 34th street trying to look for a prom dress, but we had no luck in finding one. Luckily, we ended up finding new heels, they were a classic black strappy heel and so I decided I had to wear a classic black dress along with them.

After a while of looking for a prom dress I ended up finding one. It was a long halter black dress that tied around the neck and it had a cut out detailing on the front in the shape of a triangle. It also had a high slit on the left leg and although it was a long dress it made me feel confident because of the high slit. I paired my dress with my new black heels, a diamond choker and a diamond bracelet my mother got me. The accessories pulled the look together and the heels altered my height, so it made me look taller.

Prom ended up being really fun and I enjoyed seeing everyone all dressed up. I remember feeling excited to attend and spend time with my friends along with my other classmates. I felt the adrenaline throughout my body as I stepped into the venue and was ready to dance the night away.



graduation

June 2017 was the month and year of my high school graduation. It took place in Trinity Church in downtown Manhattan on Wall Street. My parents and I were getting ready, but I had to leave earlier since my graduating class had to walk together from the school to the church, which was only a block away.

I did not really like the way I looked in dresses at the time and I didn't find them comfortable either, so my outfit was very simple. I was going to be wearing my cap and gown over my outfit either way, so I wore a light denim skirt and black bodysuit with thin straps along with holographic block heels since those were the most comfortable. I straightened my hair and wore it down as well as put on some makeup to make me feel confident.

Graduating high school was one of my greatest accomplishments. Even though it seems normal to graduate high school for me it was something that made me proud because it made my parents proud. They didn't get to attend high school at all and so this was a very important moment for me. I never knew that wearing a cap and gown would mean so much to me and fill me with excitement, nerves but most of all happiness.



blonde for two days

It was the summer of 2018 and my family was getting ready to go to New Jersey for my cousin Giselle's sweet 15. It was the start of summer, but the weather was at a good 90 degrees. The day before this I did one of the worst mistakes I could've ever done, I dyed my hair blonde. I didn't end up liking my hair, but I had to leave for Jersey the next morning so there was nothing I could do.

When we arrived at my cousin's house all we had to do was get ready before her guests arrived for the party. Before dying my hair, I had already picked out a dress to wear. It was a red dress made out of light fabric perfect for the summer weather. It had a ruffle off the shoulder detail with a straight silhouette and a skirt that dropped before the knee. It also had a belt that tied around the waist in order to cinch it. I paired my dress with silver block heels and wore my hair down since it was cut short.

The day was very hot and humid so the curls in my hair did not last so long and I felt like everyone was staring at my newly blonde hair. I did not feel my best this day since I hated the way my hair looked. I ended up dying my hair brown again since I did not like it at all and to this day, I get flashbacks of when I was blonde for two days and not the good kind.



my sister's communion

My younger sister, Gaby, had been studying two years in order to make her first communion and finally the day she had been waiting for came. It was June 2018; the air was warm, and the sun burned bright. We all woke up earlier than usual this day in order to have a good morning and get ready to head to church later in the evening. My mom had invited her sisters to attend the ceremony and come back to our house after for dinner to celebrate my sister.

She wore a white dress that was tighter at the waist and flowy at the bottom. The dress had a round neckline with short, beaded lace sleeves and the top of the dress had beaded detailing, while the bottom was made of chiffon. With her dress, she wore white stockings, white ballet flats and a flower crown on her hair. Her outfit made her look a bit older but in a good way. When she was younger, she would wear dresses for every occasion but as she grew older, her style started to change and getting her to wear a dress had become a complicated sport. I knew she didn't like the fact that she had to wear a dress, but I also knew that despite that, she was filled with excitement.

Gaby and I have had a somewhat complicated relationship at first because of our age difference, but as we grew older, we started to become closer. We still have our typical arguments as every sibling does, but she has taught me a lot throughout the years. Even though my sister is young she's very determined and logical and even if I don't I know that without her I would be lost.



jaripeo

The feast, one of the biggest events that takes place in Mexico every summer where people sell handmade souvenirs, jewelry, accessories, candy and food as well as go on the rides and attractions. It was July 30th, 2018 and I was staying at my grandmother's house in Santa Ana in Mexico. One of the most popular activities that take place during the feast here are jaripeos. Jaripeos is a form of bull riding and the goal is to successfully ride the bull and not get flung out by it.

My grandmother is a big fan of these events, so she decided to take my cousins and I to the jaripeo show that was taking place at the feast. It was my first time going so I was excited to see the event.

Although it was the middle of summer, the evening was chilly, and it only got colder the later it got. I had to make sure I kept myself warm, so I wore one of my favorite pairs of blue jeans and a white zip up hoodie along with my black and white converse shoes. Since we would be walking up the hill to go to the event, I wanted to be comfortable. I wore my hair up in a ponytail which for some reason made me look older, which I considered to be a good thing since people are always shocked when I reveal my age to them.

As we arrived at the jaripeo I could hear all the cheering from the people inside. I felt their excitement from the line as we were waiting to get in and as I settled to watch the event, I couldn't believe my eyes. Going to the jaripeo is one of my favorite events I ever went to and one of the best memories I have since I got to see something my grandmother enjoys.



bfn (best friend for now)

Best friend. One of the most important labels you can give to someone besides “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” in my opinion. Growing up, I had the tendency to call different people my best friend, but I never had one I strongly connected with the way my high school best friend did. January of 2019 was the last time we ever hung out. We ended up going to the World Trade Center since it was our usual hang out spot and we loved the mall next to the oculus.

Winter was at its prime, so I decided to wear my favorite white chunky sweater on top of my long sleeve shirt to keep me extra warm. I also wore my favorite pair of denim jeans, and my Dr. Marten boots to keep my feet warm in the cold with my favorite black fur coat.

This day was the last time I saw her, we would still message each other until eventually we both stopped. I did not know why we stopped and to this day, I find myself wondering why. I have a photo from this exact day and every time I come across it, I can't help but feel confused and upset. I sometimes have the urge to reach out and ask her how she's doing and tell her that I miss her but other times I tell myself I don't care yet secretly I do.



trips to chelsea

It was a sunny day in July of 2019, my parents finally decided to get married after years of being together. During the summer my mother, my aunt, my cousin and I headed towards David's Bridal located on West 25th Street between Sixth Ave and Broadway in Chelsea, Manhattan. We went multiple times, but the most special visit was our second.

My mother was looking for her perfect wedding dress so my aunt, the workers and myself helped her look by pulling some options for her to try on. My mother wanted something with straps to narrow down her shoulders and something that wasn't so heavy so she would be able to walk. She tried on many dresses but none of them seemed to wow her. After hours of trying on different dresses with different cuts and silhouettes, it was time to try on the last one she picked out.

The wedding dress was an off white with a V-neck and straps that moved outward to sit directly above the shoulder. The top of the dress had lots of beaded details all around the bust, the waist and some of it came down to the lower part of the dress as well. The bottom of the dress was not too puffy, my mother didn't like the huge puffy dresses, she thought it would make her look wide and she was very clear she wanted something to slim her down.

Once she had the dress on and came out to show us how it looked, she was smiling, and we all knew that would be her wedding dress. She ended up picking this dress and in David's Bridal tradition, rang the bell to let others know she found her dream dress. Seeing my mother in her wedding dress was something that filled me with joy and excitement for her big day.



wedding bells

As autumn came around so did the day of my parents' wedding. The weather was perfect it wasn't too hot nor too cold but there was a chilly breeze that gave you goosebumps. It was the 26th of October in 2019 and my parents got married at Epiphany Church located at 96 south ninth street in Williamsburg in Brooklyn.

My parents have been preparing since the start of the year and so have my sister and me. This was a special day and we all wanted to look our best. I wore a light pink lace bodycon dress with short sleeves and a V-neck. The dress was short and hit right above my knee which I loved because of my height. My hair was short, so I curled it and put on hairclips on both sides of my hair. I did my own makeup this day and put on silver jewelry and my silver high heels to match.

Preparing and heading to the ceremony was chaotic but once we were there everything fell into place. Seeing my parents get married surprised me because I got very emotional and I'm not a very emotional person. I loved how the wedding turned out and it was one of the happiest days for me and my parents. Seeing their wedding video makes me miss the day although it wasn't too long ago.



the sing in single

Summer is always something I look forward to every year for many reasons. The sun sets much later in the day, it's always warm and most of all I get to see one of my best friends who comes back from college. During the summer of 2020, my friends and I planned a beach day and headed to Jones Beach in Long Island. I woke up really early so we could drive there, pick up our friends along the way and find a good spot on the beach.

A few days before I went to H&M and bought a pair of bathing suits to wear for our beach day. I ended up wearing my new striped white and green bikini that had a straight cut top with straps that you tie on your shoulder and matching bottoms. On top I wore light blue denim shorts and a white cropped top. I wanted to feel comfortable but also wear something that was easy to take on and off since we were going to be in the water and tanning in the sun.

My friend, Freddy drove us to the beach and along the way we picked up our friend Genesis. The drive there was fun and filled with nothing but laughs and lots of singing. Every time we all hang out together it's nothing but excitement, laughs, bliss and of course, tons of jokes.



bear mountain

July 30th, 2020, the day my uncle's girlfriend took my family and my younger cousins to the park. It was not just any park as I thought it would be but rather it was Bear Mountain in New York. At first when I found out she was taking us to the park I thought we'd have a cute picnic, so I dressed up in something I'd wear on a walk in Central Park.

I threw on a black tube top with some denim shorts since it was pretty warm outside along with my white Nike Airforce 1s. I also put on a striped blue and white linen shirt that wasn't so heavy just in case it got chilly with some jewelry and eyeliner to elongate my eyes. Since I thought, we were going to have a picnic I tried to look nice, but I couldn't be more wrong. My uncle's girlfriend ended up telling us that we'd be climbing up the mountain to the very top and I was surprised because I did not know what I was getting myself into.

We ended up climbing up the mountain and it was one of the most difficult things I had to do. At first, I was excited since I never gone up the mountain before but the more, we walked the more tired I got. I realized I should've worn something more casual like leggings and a t-shirt. I began to feel tired, out of breath and most of all, sweaty. It was not a good feeling but once we reached the top, the view was worth the leg pain and sweat.



about the author

Sheila Rodriguez is a student, creative and aspiring stylist. She grew up in Brooklyn, New York and now attends the NYC College of Technology and is studying Business of Fashion. Since she was very young her mother would dress her up in many dresses and skirts and her love for fashion has carried on to her adult life. One of her greatest accomplishments include graduating high school and attending college. Her family comes from Mexico and one of her biggest life goals include buying her parents their dream house and giving back to those who are less fortunate. Her dreams include starting her own clothing business or working for a magazine in the near future.



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