

Unforgettable Memories
Written and Illustrated by
Shaimelys Marcano

Unforgettable Memories

Acknowledgements:

I would dedicate this book to my family because they taught me with perseverance anything is possible. In Spite of all the hardships life has thrown at us we have come together to face it dead on together. I am strong and reliable because of them. I strive to be better everyday for them.

Prologue:

Unforgettable Memories represents and encompasses the person that is Shaimelys because it describes significant moments in her life and what she wore during those special moments. I have had the privilege of being her sister and have been able to witness all of her accomplishments. Her passion for fashion, her perseverance, and endless comprehension skills have always been admirable qualities that I someday hope to achieve. Throughout her book you too will begin to admire her characteristics. As you get to experience moments that encompass pieces of what makes her Shaimelys.

These significant moments have become part of her memories that will live with her for the rest of her life. What she felt throughout her unforgettable memories and why she chose to wear certain pieces of clothing helps readers to understand her mindset. This book depicts how Shaimelys was moulded by her surroundings to become the person she is today. The struggles she had to go through without ever really diminishing the importance and significance of her unforgettable memories, allows for readers to make a personal connection with Shaimelys.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alondra M." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'A' and a distinct 'M' at the end.

Alondra Marcano Santos

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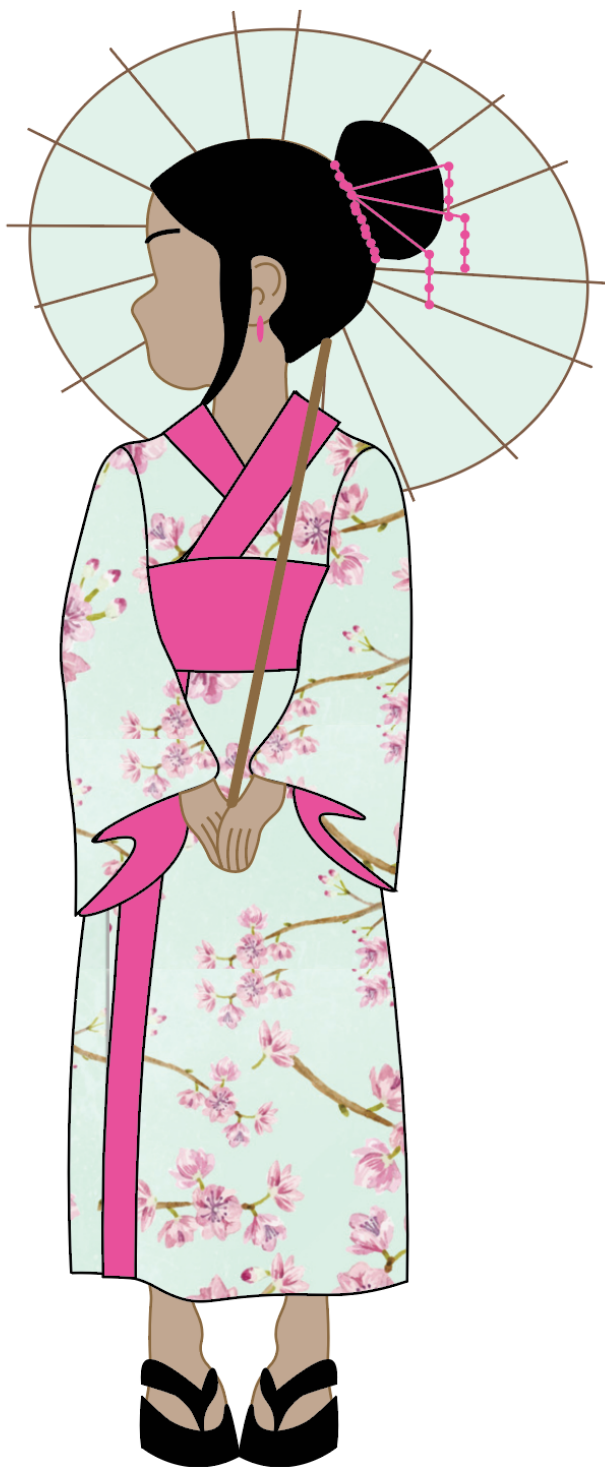
Chapter 1: Quinceanera de Lee

Lee's Quinceanera took place in Puerto Rico, Rio Grande in 2007. Lee, short for LeeMarie, is my cousin. The quinceanera took place a year before my mother, sister and I moved to New York City. The event took place in a large rented center where more than 100 people attended. The theme of the celebration was Japan. My cousin loved the Japanese geisha women, therefore she made all the girls who attended her quinceanera wear kimonos, Geisha shoes, and a Bamboo traditional Japanese umbrella. All of the kimonos were custom made by a family friend.

Since all of the Kimonos were custom made for all the girls, everyone had different colored kimonos. They were all made from a fine silk material with vibrant cherry blossom flowers. The kimono I wore was lime green with a soft cherry blossom flower pattern. The Orbi, which is the fabric wrapped along the waist, was a hot pink color. The Bamboo umbrella was a *hand-held* accessory with a lime green color on the inside of the umbrella, which matched the kimono and a hot pink color on the outside with a cherry blossom print. My mother *shaped* my hair up into a bun with side bangs, she then *clipped* in some Japanese hair accessories. She applied white powder on my face and went on to apply makeup inspired by the Japanese Geisha women. I had bright pink blushed cheeks, red lipstick, and black cat-eye eyeliner with pink eye shadow.

This dress was significant to me because it was the first time I was able to dress up in custom. I felt very pretty that day. I felt unique and beautiful because no one else there had on the exact same dress I had. My mother had taken a lot of time and effort to beautify my appearance and I really cherished that time we spent together. At the start of the night all the girls made their entrance into the quinceanera with my cousin leading them. It felt like a fashion show, the crowd greeted us with applause and flashing cameras. I was so excited. Little did I know that would be the last time I ever got to spend time with my family like that. A year later we moved to New York City. After moving to the big apple, the time and memories from this day became more intangible and unforgettable memories. I would not feel this way again for a very long time.

Chapter 1: Quinceanera de Lee



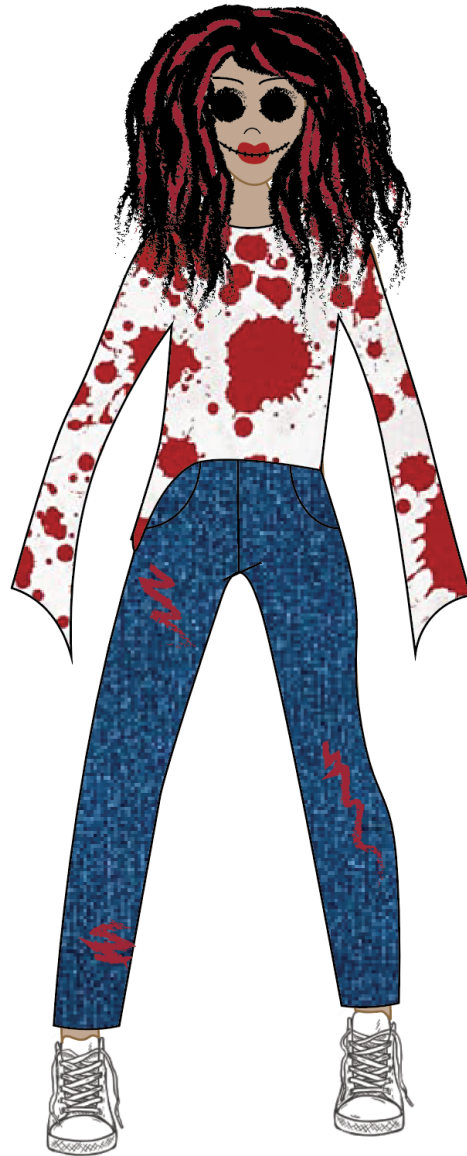
Chapter 2: First and Last Halloween Celebrated

We moved to New York City in December of 2008. After living in the big city for almost a year, my sister and I got to meet a lot of new friends. We learned how to speak English in less than six months. Moving to New York was definitely a cultural shock for us. We were so used to the school system in Puerto Rico that we found it hard sometimes to manage. That year, I remember first hearing about the Halloween spirit at school. This was very unusual for me because in Puerto Rico the school I attended did not permit Halloween to be celebrated. I grew up in a christian household therefore celebrating halloween was certainly not allowed. That year though my sister and I decided to enter the halloween costume contest at school. We both decided to dress up as zombies. Since our mother did not approve of this event we decided to get dressed up in school. The school was offering to do face makeup for all the students.

My sister and I decided to dress up the day of the contest in order for my mom to not have any suspicion. We had to make our costumes from whatever we could find at home that morning. We grabbed two of our stepfathers white long sleeve work shirts and splattered red paint all over it to make the illusion of blood. We also decided to modify the shirt further by tearing up the sleeves and the bottom of the shirt so that it could fit us a bit better. We paired the top with jeans and red paint splatters to add a bloody *surface design* to the jeans. I wore my white converse that day. The school also had different *hair color* sprays so I decided to let my hair down and mess it up a bit to add more *volume* and *texture*. I then went on to spray some parts of my hair with red paint. I also decided to use black paint on my eyes and applied red lipstick. I drew some stitching around my cheeks and lips. That day we ended up being some of the winners of the contest. As a gift we received a pumpkin basket to collect candy with. After school we decided to go trick or treating with some of our friends around the neighborhood.

When we got home that day after trick or treating my mother was astonished. She became so angry that we had disobeyed her. I remember that halloween because it was the first and last time my sister and I ever got to celebrate it. My mother threw away all the candy we had collected that day. I felt so sad, I remember crying and feeling guilty. I was punished and so was my little sister. For the first time I felt like I was a bad child. I gathered the courage that day

to talk to my mom and asked for forgiveness. She hugged me and cried with me. She felt horrible for having thrown all the candy away. Somehow being embraced by my mother made me feel at ease. The next day my mom came home from work with a bag of candy she had purchased from the supermarket. She emphasized that the candy was not meant to celebrate halloween. She just simply wanted us to be able to have some candy. That day brought my mother and I closer to each other. I was thankful. I will never forget that day.



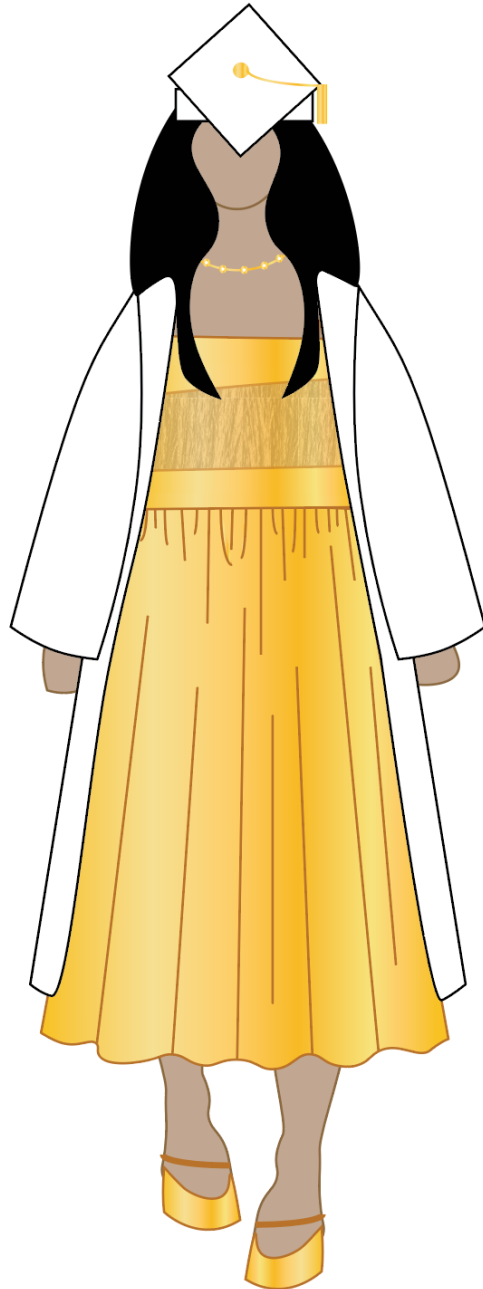
Chapter 3: Middle school graduation

I graduated from middle school in June, 2013. I attended what was known as the Museum Magnet school (PS 191), Located on 300 west 61st street New York. The days leading up to my graduation my mother had taken up a couple of jobs in order to afford the graduation fees, my senior trip, and my graduation dress. My mother's highest level of education is high school, therefore not many jobs wanted her. When my mom first came to New York she began working as a housekeeper. She cleaned people's homes for a living. That same year my mother, sister and I became homeless. We were kicked out of the place we were living at because there was a limit to how many people can live in a two bedroom apartment. At the time we were living with my mother's cousin and her 3 kids. We eventually got a spot at a homeless shelter. My mother would work long hours to save up money so that we could move out and get our own apartment. That same year was the year I was supposed to graduate from middle school. My mom had purchased my graduation dress before I could even see it. She had picked it out for me.

She had purchased a golden silk dress and a pair of ½" gold heels to match with it. The golden dress was an A-Line dress with spaghetti straps. The top panel had crushed silk and a thick waist band. The bottom of the dress was a high-low flared skirt. I remember hating the dress as soon as I saw it. The day of my graduation I wore a white cap and gown along with my golden dress and high heels. I paired this outfit with a white and gold pearl necklace and pearl earring. For my hair I had asked my mother if she could straighten it. She straightened my hair and wrapped the front of my hair back. She then curled the ends of my hair. I also wore nude stockings underneath my dress so that my bare legs were not showing.

I watched my mother work so hard and desperately to gather all the money she needed to pay for all of my graduation fees. I remember that day because my mother was so proud of me. At first I tried to hide the dress from my friends because I was embarrassed. But I knew all the blood and tears my mom had to endure to be able to buy that dress. Although she never complained about the situation we were in, I could feel all the pain and frustration she was going through. I opened my cap and gown and proudly took photos with my mother and sister. My mom cried from the happiness and relief she felt. I felt grateful for all

she had done with a bit of sadness and shame for even doubting my mom's taste. I received many compliments from my friends. Looking back at the dress now it was extremely elegant and timeless. I looked amazing that day thanks to my mom. I can look back at my graduation pictures and not be ashamed, but instead be proud. Mother knows best after all.



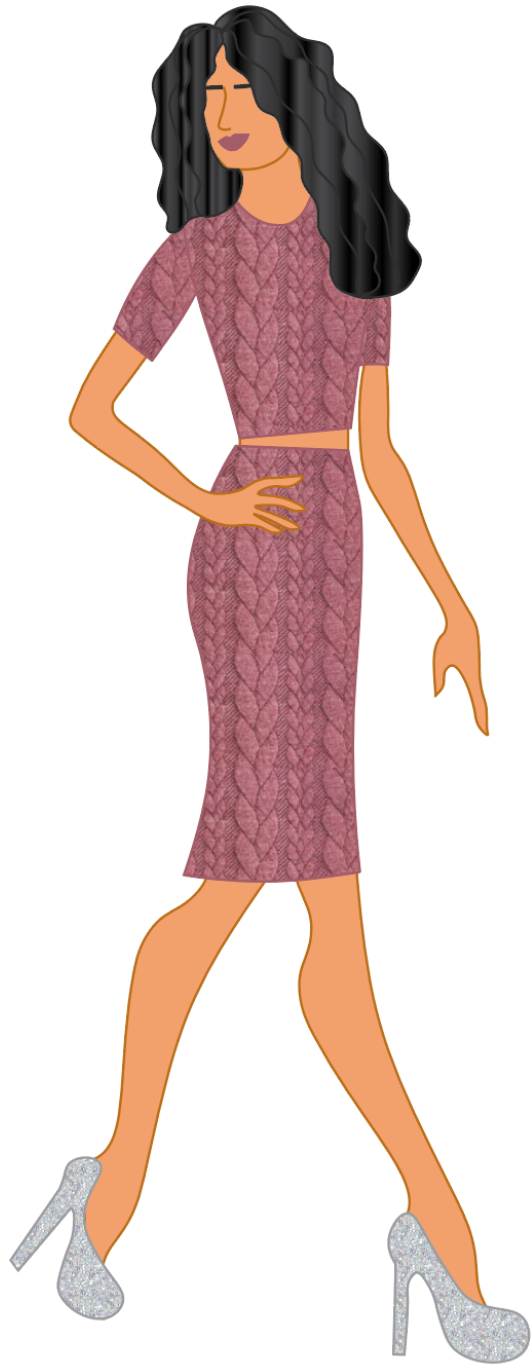
Chapter 4: Anti-Prom Fashion Show

Anti-Prom is an event that provides an alternative and safe space for all teens regardless of their sexuality, gender identity, and the way they dress. Young teens from all over the city are welcome to attend as long as they provide a high school ID. There is no particular dress code but they have a different fashion show theme every year. Students are more than welcome to dress up in costumes or just show up in casual clothing. Anti-Prom takes place in The New York Public Library located on 5th avenue 42nd street Bryant Park. The New York Public Library partners up every year with The high school of Fashion industries to fund several selected students in creating garments for a fashion show hosted by the NYPL in June. I was one of the very few students selected to participate in this special event fashion show in 2016 and 2017. In 2016 the theme was Secret Garden and in 2017 the theme was Greek Gods and Goddesses. After the fashion show students were able to party and eat as if it was any other fashion show. Everything provided was free of charge.

For the Anti-Prom in 2017 I wore a rose colored two piece jacquard set along with 4" high heels that were silver *embellished* with rhinestones and diamonds. The top was a short sleeve crop top with a 3D braided *textured* to it. The skirt was a bodycon skirt with the same texture as the top. In the middle of the skirt there was a fishnet design which then left the bottom of the skirt with the same texture as the top. I modified my hair by braiding my hair and then undoing them. This made my *hair* look wavy and more *voluminous*. I wanted to be able to dance and have fun with my friends so I changed my shoes into something that would be more comfortable. Therefore, after the fashion show I changed my shoes to black suede flats decorated with black studs. I also put on a cropped leather jacket with mesh cutouts. And zippers on the sleeves. This gave me a more edgy look and I felt more comfortable to move and dance without my feet hurting.

I remember feeling excited. This was my last year in high school and I wanted to indulge in as many opportunities as I could. I had done Anti-Prom the year before but in 2017 it was significant because I was a mentor and one of the designers of the fashion show. I was proud of all the Junior students I had mentored, their designs were incredible and they looked so happy to have been a part of the Anti-prom that year. The fashion show was a success and everyone had a blast. I

was interviewed by a news reporter and a blogger which made me feel like I had done something good that year. All the hard work was not in vain. It all paid off in the end. I used my sister as my model. My mother was able to attend the fashion show that year and was extremely proud of my sister and I. I had a great time.



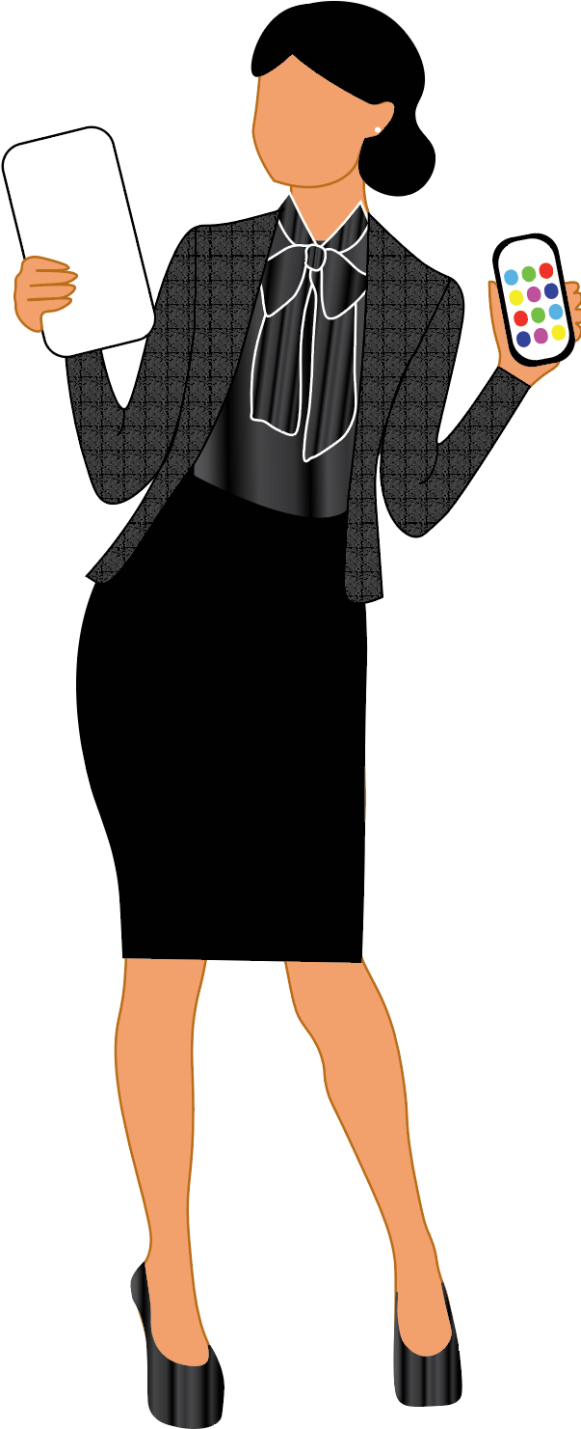
Chapter 5: First Internship Interview

I attended The high school of Fashion industry located on 225 west 23rd street New York. In my senior year I was presented with the opportunity to apply for a paid internship at a small childrenswear company. For 2 weeks leading up to the interview I had researched the company and its mission statement, I prepared my resume and portfolio. I spoke with the internship coordinator and did a mock interview with her 2 days before the actual interview. I also asked for advice on the attire which she suggested I wear something professional. This internship opportunity was offered to the top 15 students in the design department at the high school. I was lucky to make it on that list but it meant that I had to compete with 15 other individuals for an internship position at H.I.S international.

The day before the internship I purchased a black blazer, black blouse, black one inch heels and black midi skirt. The blazer was black tweed with silk plackets on the sides as well as the collar of the blazer. I paired this with a black Jacquard bodycon midi skirt and a silk blouse with a bow tie neck. The high heels were made out of a silk and suede fabric. I modified my body by painting my *nails* a natural color and straightened my *hair* out to make myself look more presentable. I parted my hair to the side and tied it up into a bun. For jewelry, I decided to do simple things such as white pearl stud earrings because it would fit perfectly with the elegant sophisticated look I was trying to achieve.

When I arrived at H.I.S international I remember feeling extremely nervous. I felt like my stomach was turning and I could vomit. As I was seated and waited for my turn to be interviewed, I looked around and I felt even more uneasy. My fellow classmates were all wearing casual attire. I thought to myself that maybe I overdressed. But when I was called in for the interview, the interviewer was extremely happy to see me. She greeted me and took a second to scan my attire from head to toe. She complimented me and went on to explain what my tasks would be as an intern. I maintained eye contact and a good posture. At the end of the interview she asked me when I could start. I was a bit confused because there were still several people outside waiting to be interviewed as well. But confidently I told her as soon as possible. She then gave me a tour of the office and introduced me to everyone. At the end she explained that she hired me because I was the only one that looked presentable and confident. She was impressed by how prepared I

was with my resume and portfolio. I remember feeling accomplished as I made my way home that day. I was proud of myself, I had landed my first job in the Fashion industry. Life was becoming more exciting.



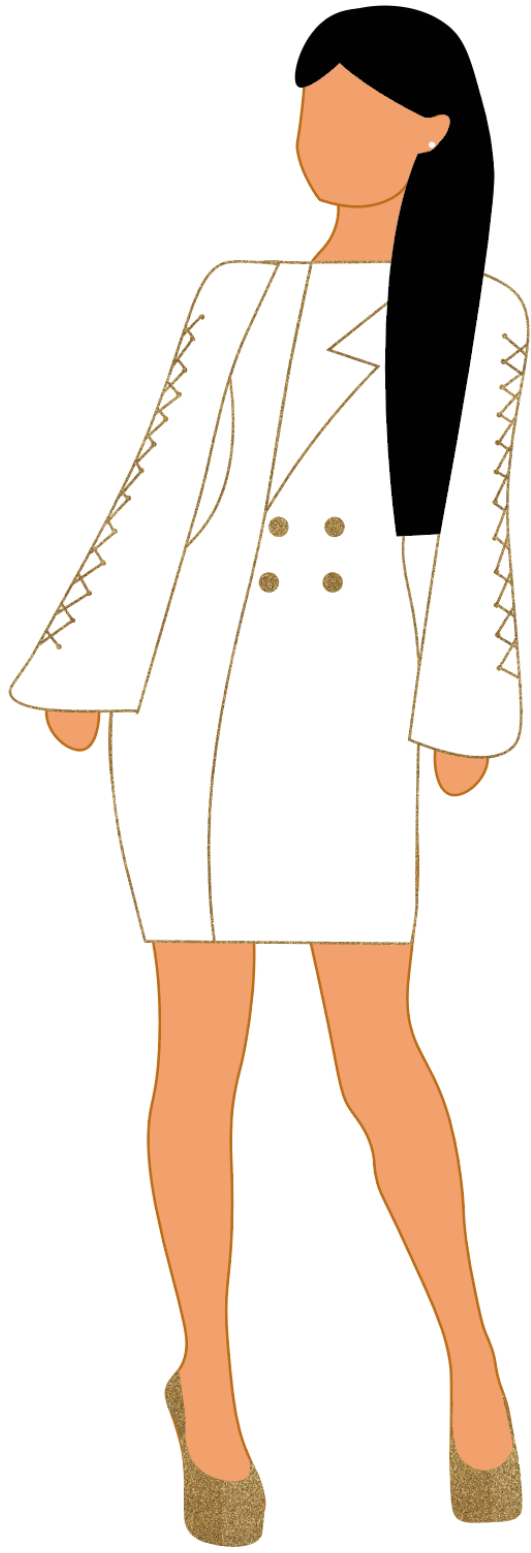
Chapter 6: Yearbook picture day (high school)

The graduation pictures for high school were taken by Portraits USA Inc. located on 325 38th street Brooklyn, New York. The 3rd to last month of my senior year I received an appointment for senior picture day. We were assigned by class number on the days we had to visit the photography studio together. Everyone came dressed up from head to toe. I myself also dressed up but once I reached the site I found out at the photoshoot that we all had to wear a black gown over our clothes. According to the photographer, everyone had to look the same. There was no room for individuality which is what I was going for.

I wore a white mini blazer dress with bell sleeves that had lace up details. The dress had six gold buttons on the front. I paired this dress with one inch gold high heels. I *modified* my *hair* the day before by straightening. I then curled my hair to give it more *volume* and *proportion* by making my hair wavy. I painted my *nails* a burgundy color to add a pop of color. I do not wear makeup on a regular basis, but for that day I decided to do a smokey eye look with cateye eyeliner and burgundy lipstick. I applied some golden eye shadow over the smokey eye look and outlined my eye with black eyeliner to emphasize my brown eyes.. They made everyone let their hair down and put a black velvet dress over our clothes. They then told us to hold several *hand-held objects* such as roses, caps, and diplomas on our hands as props.

I remember feeling disappointed and a bit uncomfortable that day. I wanted to look different in my senior yearbook. But everyone ended up looking the same. In the end I was glad that I was having my picture taken, I knew it meant a lot for my family. They were all anticipating my senior graduation pictures to come through the mail that year. I was excited to see what I looked like. The pictures came out looking very nice. I looked elegant.

Chapter 6: Yearbook picture day (high school)



Chapter 8: Swaraski crystal competition

During my senior year in high school I had to create a mood/Inspirational board that would represent the garment I would create for my senior fashion show. When I created my moodboard I submitted it to my teacher Ms. David. My design was inspired by the Architectural structure of the Sydney opera house located in Sydney, Australia. The garment I had designed was structured with similar shapes to that of the Sydney opera house. My teacher submitted my board to two different competitions without me knowing, I won both. The first competition I won was The Swarovski Crystal Competition, the second competition was The Lord & Taylor competition. The high school of Fashion industry had partnered up with Swarovski crystals that year. Swarovski was going to be providing crystals to the top 10 students in the Fashion Design department, which we would use in the senior fashion show collection. After winning the competition my teacher informed me and I visited a Swarovski crystal store where they showed us all the crystals they had and let us pick what we wanted to use on our garments. Everything was announced last minute and I had to rush to meet the representatives.

I remember wearing a black jumpsuit with a halter neck top, velvet moto jacket and black converse. The black jumpsuit was made of a thick Jacquard fabric. That day I had styled my *hair* in a ponytail and had applied make up. To enhance my *face* I had applied gold metallic eyeshadow and black cat eyeliner. I had also put on mascara in my *eyelashes* to make them look more *voluminous*. I applied red lipstick to my *lips* to make them look *fuller* and more plump. I had on gold earrings and a gold necklace. I paired it with a black and gold bangle.

I remember feeling very nervous and a bit shocked that day. It came to me as a surprise that my teacher had entered me into this competition. I was happy too because she believed my work was good enough to submit to such an important competition. I remember feeling like I was a bit dressed down for the occasions just because I was not wearing the right shoes. I looked somewhat okay because I had been wearing all black and had makeup on. I did not look so bad for a last minute presentation.

Chapter 8: Swaraski crystal competition



Chapter 8: Prom #1 Vs. Prom #2

I attended two high school proms. The first prom I attended was my high school prom that took place in June 2017. The prom took place in pier 63. For my high school prom I remember visiting many stores that sold prom dresses but could not find anything within my price range. Everything seemed so expensive. I then heard about the Bell and Bow program which donated prom dresses to young girls that did not have the money to buy prom dresses and accessories. The bell and Bow program has various locations throughout New York city. I attended their event in Brooklyn. There I found a beautiful gown along with accessories and shoes. The second prom I attended was in June 2019. This Prom was at my boyfriend Luis' school. He attended the High school of Humanities preparatory academy located 351 west 18th street New York. Luis' High school prom took place in Chelsea pier 63 located on 23rd street and 12th avenue. For his prom I was more financially able to buy a prom dress. I had been working for a small private company and was earning approximately \$7 dollars an hour. I had been saving all year to get my nails, hair, and eyebrows done. I also had saved up enough money to buy a prom dress.

For my prom I wore a white sweetheart neckline gown decorated with gold embroidery on the chest. The dress was mermaid shaped. The bottom of the dress flared out and had a few layers of gold embroidery and mesh. I remember falling in love with the dress as soon as I saw it because it was a lightweight material. My prom took place in June, therefore it was warm. The dress would keep me cool as I danced my way through the night. I *modified* my *hands* by getting my nails done. I remember getting acrylic nails with a silver glitter gel nail polish. I went to the hair salon the day before and got my hair done. I *modified* my *hair* by having it straightened out and then curled to create waves. I also modified my face by applying makeup and getting my eyebrows threaded. By having my eyebrows threading I enhanced the way my eyebrows looked, they looked more refined and clean. They helped my eyes pop out more.

For the second prom I attended I wore a burgundy bridesmaid dress that was shaped as a mermaid dress. The front was a deep V cut and a lace back panel. When I purchased the dress it looked a bit plain for me so I visited a trim store and bought about a yard of iron-on crystals. I cut 3 pieces and attached them to the front of the dress along the V cut. I also applied a strip to the waistband as well.

This transformed the dress from a boring bridesmaid dress to a more elegant gown. I had visited the nail salon for this prom as well and transformed my hands by once again getting acrylic nails. This time I got a silver iridescent gel nail polish. I wore a silver diamond bracelet. I also got my *hair* straightened and curled towards the ends. This gave more *body* and *volume* to my hair. I applied hair spray that gave a gorgeous shine to my hair, it appeared as though my hair were strands of silk. I wore nude sandals since I wanted to be comfortable while dancing. I had my eyebrows threaded as well and applied makeup to my face.

For the first prom I remember feeling very beautiful. I felt confident walking to the dinner reception. I also remember feeling a bit sad because my boyfriend and I have a two year age difference and he was not allowed to attend my prom. I really wanted him to be there because I wanted to share that once in a lifetime opportunity with me but he could not. There was an age limit in order to attend the prom and unfortunately he was too young. For his prom though, I remember feeling nervous. I was not too fond of the dress I had picked out because it was a last minute dress. He had picked out a burgundy suit, which made it extremely hard for me to find a dress that would match his suit. I did not feel as confident as I did for my prom. I felt a bit insecure going into his prom.

Chapter 8: Prom #1 Vs. Prom #2



Chapter 9: High School Graduation

I graduated from the High school of Fashion Industries in June 2017. The graduation took place in the Coliseum Theater in Washington heights located at 4260 Broadway west 181 street. Many of my family members attended my high school graduation such as my grandmother, Mother, Father, Sister, Uncle, Aunts, Cousin, and boyfriend. My grandmother named Carmen Emilia had flown in from Puerto Rico to attend my graduation. My Uncle Joe and his wife Kay drove from New Jersey to come see me walk the stage. During my senior year in high school I had been part of two after school programs and an internship. I had very little time to go out and shop for clothes. I also had no money to buy a dress for graduation. When my grandmother arrived from Puerto Rico she was shocked I did not have a dress yet so she took it upon herself to buy me a dress for my graduation. She bought me a burgundy dress which I immediately hated.

The burgundy dress consisted of long embroidered sleeves as well as the top area of the dress. The bottom half was made of an ottoman fabric. I paired the dress with a pair of silver high heels embellished with diamonds. I did not have time to straighten my *hair* the day before or the day of so I decided to leave my *hair* natural. I have naturally curly hair, therefore in order for the hair to not become overwhelming and puffy I braid the front of my *hair* and tied it to the back. This allowed me to be able to put my cap on without worrying about it not fitting or falling down. The cap and gown for my high school was a royal blue color. The sash I wore read “Class of 2017” and it was the color gold. I *modified my face* by applying makeup. I decided to go with a natural golden look. I applied gold eyeshadow and black eyeliner with mascara. This helped enhance the look of my eyes. I wore large diamond earrings to match the diamond high heels I wore that day. The day before the graduation I remember *embellishing* and *decorating* my cap with swarovski crystals and white roses. All of my friends were doing the same to differentiate their caps from each other. The message I decided to write on my cap was “THE BEST IS YET TO COME.”

While I was not too fond of the dress my grandmother had picked out for me I wanted to honor her that day. She was so excited to see me in the dress. I do not remember opening my gown for any of the pictures. All the photos I took of my gown remained close. I remember feeling extremely happy that day. I had closed a

chapter of my life that would help me begin a new journey. I had worked so hard during my senior year by participating in afterschool programs, mentoring, and doing an internship. All my hardwork has paid off. The day that my family and I had been waiting for had finally come. I know this graduation made my mother extremely proud. I was walking the stage and receiving my high school diploma. It was something she did not have the opportunity to do because on the day of her graduation I had gotten sick and she was unable to attend. I know she felt extremely proud of me as well as herself because all the sacrifices she made for me had gotten me to that point in life. I did not just walk the stage for myself but for my parents who never had that opportunity. I felt beautiful, strong, and fearless.



Chapter 10: Meeting BF's Family

The first time I met my boyfriend's parents was in the church they attend. Luis' parents are Christian. He thought it would be a good idea to have our first encounter through the church. They attend the "Pentecostal Church of Jesus" on 1416 Boston Rd, Bronx, New York. When he first introduced me to his parents, his father, who is also named Luis, seemed to be happy. His mother Evelyn however did not take it too well. She insisted that we were just friends. Luis and I had been dating for almost a year. I was raised in a christian household myself so I knew going into this situation was probably going to be awkward. Me being two years older than my boyfriend, I could see how his mother would have a negative reaction to us dating. I wanted to dress presentable and very conservative. It had been years since I had visited a church but I was fully aware of what attire was acceptable for a church setting.

I wore a midi wrap dress with black leather ankle boots. The midi wrap dress was a long sleeve dress with puff shoulders. The fabric was made of a knit poly mesh that was soft and see-through lined with a black jersey undergarment dress. I wore a long sleeve dress so that it would cover my arms. The christian religion calls for women to wear more modest clothing. I did not want to have any skin being exposed therefore I wore long sleeves as well as black stockings underneath to cover my bare *legs* from showing. The long sleeves and stocking served as a coverup but also as *protection* from the cold climate. The day I first met Luis' parents was a cold winter day. I wore small diamond stud earrings to not draw a lot of attention to my neck area. Besides the earrings I chose not to wear anymore jewelry or make up. I parted my *hair* to the side and brushed my *hair* back into a braided bun to give some *depth* and *texture* to the simple bun look. This allowed me to look more mature and elegant.

On this day I felt very confident in what I wore, I had planned everything out strategically to look a certain way. I was very nervous of course since this would be the first impression I was making on my boyfriend's parents But I was confident that they would accept me. The dress I wore gave me the courage to be able to stand in front of his parents without feeling embarrassed. After meeting me, they became more accepting of the relationship.

Chapter 10: Meeting BF's Family



Chapter 11: 21st Birthday

For my twenty-first birthday my coworkers offered to take me out to dinner. This birthday was significant to me because it marked the start of adulthood for me. I was not expecting to go out and celebrate my birthday that year due to the pandemic but my coworkers found a nice restaurant that allowed outdoor dining. The restaurant we went to was called Cantina Rooftop restaurant, located at 605 west 48th street, New York. This restaurant is an authentic Mexican restaurant. We dined on the rooftop surrounded by plants and beautiful colorful decor. From there we could see the skyline. I was dressed down compared to my coworkers who were all dressed up since they had been planning to take me out.

For my Twenty-first birthday I wore high waisted denim jeans, brown tube top, cream crochet sweater and patchwork slip on shoes. The high-waisted jeans were a light denim wash color. The brown tube top was made of rib fabric. The crochet sweater was a long bell sleeve sweater which had a diamond shaped flower pattern. I wore two *gold rings* on each *hand* and a smart watch. I *straightened* my hair and got a hair trim to reduce the appearance of split-ends. I wore my Daisy Marc Jacobs perfume which gave me the *scent* of wild berries, soft violets, velvety Jasmine, and sandalwood. I wore a nude color lipstick and brown eyeshadow with black mascara and a peach blush. I wanted to go for a natural look and this make up did just that.

I felt very comfortable that day. Although I was not fully dressed up like my other coworkers, I felt good. Since I went with a more natural look, I knew I would look good in all the pictures. It was an important day in my life and I am glad I got to wear something that felt comfortable and relaxed. I got to enjoy the night without worrying about my feet hurting from wearing fancy yet painful high heels.

Chapter 11: 21st Birthday



Chapter 12: Pandemic Thanksgiving Dinner

In 2020 when the pandemic hit, the world seemed to stop. Everyone was advised to stay home. Many were discouraged from gathering with family members outside of the immediate family. When Thanksgiving came along, my family and I were still in isolation. We decided to have a small thanksgiving dinner with just the four of us which consisted of my mother, father, sister and I. We stayed home and made many dishes. Prior to that year, Every year on thanksgiving we would invite other family members for dinner but this year it was just us. This made it a more peaceful and relaxed thanksgiving.

Since no one was visiting for thanksgiving that year my mother allowed my sister and I to wear pajamas for thanksgiving. I wanted to feel warm and cozy so I wore a fleece two-piece pajama pant set decorated in a thanksgiving turkey print. I wore thick warm socks. I *braid* the front of my *hair* and *inserted* gold rings in the braids. I then tied my braids back and let the back side of my hair down. In case my mother wanted to take pictures I had brushed my hair and applied some make up.

I felt extremely happy on thanksgiving. I was able to lay back and relax. For the first time we did not have to host the thanksgiving party in our home which meant we did not have to endure family drama. I got to wear what I wanted and not worry about what my family members were going to say. I did not have to listen to my aunts complain about my posture or how skinny looked. I felt comfortable and relieved.

Chapter 12: Pandemic Thanksgiving Dinner



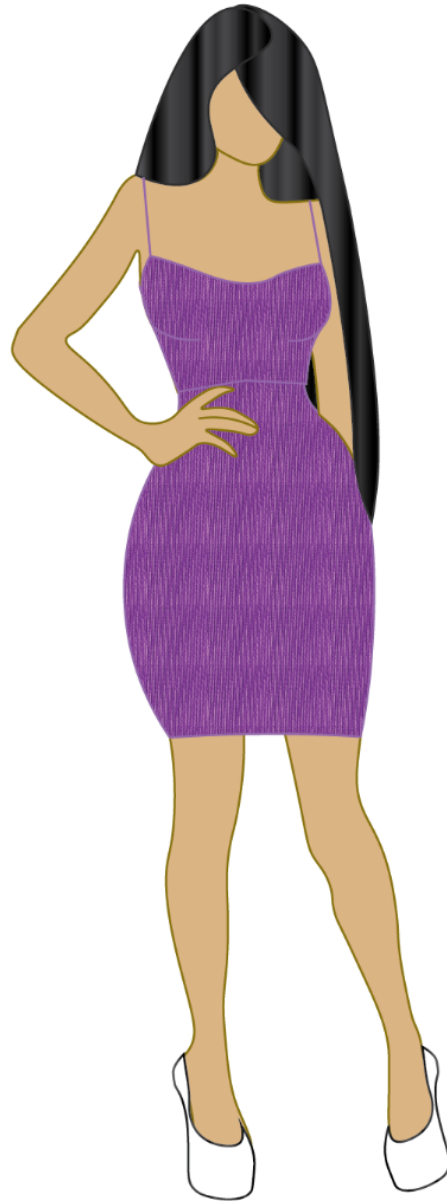
Chapter 13: 4 year Anniversary Movie Date

On our fourth year anniversary, my boyfriend and I decided to celebrate by going to the movies, having dinner and then going shopping. We went to the AMC Empire 25 movie theater. Located on 234 west 42nd street, New York. There we watched Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings. After watching this movie we went to Dave & Busters located in the same building as the AMC theater and had dinner. We played some of the games at Dave & Busters and then headed out to time square to do some shopping.

On this day I decided to wear a neon purple bodycon Midi dress. The dress was made of poly rib fabric. The dress was a cowl neck dress with spaghetti straps. I wore a pair of white sneakers and white knitted sweater along with silver jewelry. My hair was straightened out and put into rollers to create big loose curls. I applied Moroccan oil to my hair to give it a *natural rich* scent and *shine* to it. This made my hair appear healthier. I also sprayed some versace perfume on that smelled fresh and fruity. This *scent accentuated* a feminine fragrance that my boyfriend loved.

I felt very happy that day. I wore a very eye-catching sexy dress. My boyfriend loved it. I felt very beautiful in that dress, it really complimented my figure and skin complexion. I did not have to wear much makeup because the dress and jewelry I wore was more than enough to make me stand out. I wanted to look good for my boyfriend that day and I did just that.

Chapter 13: 4 year Anniversary Movie Date



Chapter 14: First Solo Vacation

After turning twenty-one in 2021 I decided to go on my first solo vacation. After attending spring 2021 classes as well as summer 2021 classes, I decided to take a break right before the Fall 2021 winter classes began. I had spent almost my entire summer in school and work so I desperately needed some time off. Since I was yet not vaccinated and did not have a passport I decided to go to a nearby U.S location. I decided to go to Puerto Rico. It had been 9 years since I last visited the small island I was born on. I brought my boyfriend along with me. We were both traveling alone for the first time. I booked a flight through jetblue and flew out on August twelve and returned on August seventeen. Prior to arriving I had booked an Airbnb apartment near Condado, Puerto Rico. Since my boyfriend and I could not drive, I booked a location near the beach and other tourist attractions. We spent most days at the beach.

On the day I flew out to Puerto Rico I remember putting on a green sage dress. The dress was a fitted maxi dress with cut-outs on the sides. The top layer of the dress was a low cut V-neck with spaghetti straps. At the center front waist there was a wooden ring that held the top and bottom of the dress together. The bottom half of the dress was a long maxi bodycon skirt with a side slit. The dress was made of a sage green stretch diamond shaped textured jersey fabric. I wore nude colored sandals with studs on them. For my hair I applied a lot of product to hold it all together. Puerto Rico is an island and there tends to be a lot of moisture in the air which causes the hair to become *frizzy*. Since my *hair* is naturally curly I needed to use a lot of product to avoid it from getting *puffy*. A day prior to departing I had also gone to the beauty salon to get a full body hair wax. This allowed my *skin* to feel and look *smoother* and *flawless*. To avoid getting *sunburn* I applied sunscreen to my *skin*. I tanned for about three days, and as a result my *skin* became about four *shades warmer*. I also purchased water-proof mascara because I knew I would be hanging out by the water a lot and I wanted to prevent my mascara from becoming runny and smudging on my face. The mascara darkened my *eyelashes* and made them look more *voluminous* in the pictures. I did not wear a lot of makeup because of the extreme hot temperatures. Instead I moisturize my skin everyday for a more natural glowing look.

I wore that dress because I wanted to feel sexy. Coming from a restrictive family this was the first time that I could walk out the door wearing something daring. Puerto Rico is an island so you can get away with wearing a lot more sexier clothes. The climate is warm so to keep cool one would naturally wear less clothes. I felt great wearing the dress. It kept me cool and feeling confident in my own skin.



Chapter 15: College Graduation

I will be graduating from the New York City College of Technology after the Fall 2021 semester. By the end of the Fall 2021 semester I will obtain a Bachelor's degree of Science from the Business and Technology of fashion department. The graduation will take place on June 5, 2022. My mother, father, sister, grandmother, and boyfriend will be attending. I am hopeful that since many new yorkers have begun to take the covid vaccine we will be able to once again have a physical setting rather than a virtual graduation.

For my college graduation I envision myself wearing a yellow mermaid dress. The mermaid dress will have a V-neckline with spaghetti straps and a slit on the right side of the dress. It would be made of a woven fabric lined with silk. For accessories I will wear gold high heels decorated with pearls. I will also wear a gold flower necklace, gold earrings, rings, and bracelets. For my *hair* I will curl it and run my fingers and scrunge through the curls to add *definition* to my curls. For my make up I would like to go with a classic smokey eye look with lash extensions. I want to do a dark smokey eye so that the darkness of the shadow highlights my brown eyes and the *extension* of lashes helps bring more *attention* to my eyes as well. For the lips I would like to do a nude glace lipstick to make my *lips* look *lucious*. I will have my *nails* professionally done at a nail salon. They will be acrylic nails in almond *shape* with gold foil and glitter.

On this day I will feel confident and radiant. I will be wearing the dress I picked out for myself without compromising for the sake of others. And without the restriction of financial burdens. This will be my day to celebrate how far I have come. All the restless nights and hard work would have been paid off. It will be a happy day to remember.

Chapter 15: College Graduation



Author Bio:



Shaimelys Marcano aspires to be a VP in product development. She is currently working for a small private company that develops children's apparel to wholesale to large corporations. She works closely with Design, Product development, Production and Sales. Acquiring knowledge and overall experience is what is most important to her. She hopes to someday create her own

company. In her free time she enjoys sewing and garment construction. She also enjoys designing avant-garde clothing.