



The Outfits I Loved

Author: Xinicol Gonzalez-Aguirre
Illustrator: Xinicol Gonzalez-Aguirre



The Outfits I Loved

Prologue

We rarely reminisce on our past outfits, I was one that never paid any mind to how I used to dress, I was more focused on the present me. On how I should look now. As I dug up these past memories of my old self-- my old likes, my old fashion sense. I found myself admiring why many of us dress the way we do. Fashion has allowed us the ability to change and shape our lives the way we want to. It connects us in ways many of us don't think about. It reminded me why my present self is the way she is. That feeling of excitement came back to me as I thought about the old outfits I used to wear and as I drew them by memory, that feeling of nostalgia came back to me, reminding me why I *loved* these outfits.

Forward

My sister is someone that rarely talks about the past, she is always mentioning her future plans or her present self. Whenever I ask her why she liked fashion so much, she would never give me a solid response. When reading over this book, and looking at the drawings and details, I finally understand why she loves the outfits she does now. Why her favorite color is pink, and why she even got her first job. Her admiration for her past outfits brings me joy. She is the reason for my fashion sense today, and my stylist when I need one.

- Ken Aguirre

Ken
Aguirre

Table of Context

Chapter 1: Love, At First Sight	p.6
Chapter 2: Rosado	p.9
Chapter 3: Foreign Land	P.12
Chapter 4: Charter School	p.15
Chapter 5: A Women	p.18
Chapter 6: Self-Love	p.21
Chapter 7: 9th grade	p.24
Chapter 8: Lavish	p.27
Chapter 9: Senior Year	p.30
Chapter 10: Adulthood	p.33
Chapter 11: My 20s	p.36
Chapter 12: Love This Outfit	p.39

Chapter 1: Love, At First Sight

It was 2004, NYC is my home, and growing up, it always felt like a dream. Taking the subway to go to Central Park, walking by the Yankee Stadium in The Bronx to stay with my nanny while my mother worked long hours, fire pumps splashing away on every corner on the hottest of days, and snowmen being built next to bodegas on the coldest ones. This was my home, but this familiarity wasn't the same for my mother, my mother migrated from Mexico to NYC at the age of 13. Having worked in a sewing factory in the garment district, my mother's childhood was nothing more than work and survival. Becoming a single mother was not what my mother wanted, especially at the age of 27, but it became her reality. Because of this, she decided that for me, her firstborn, first daughter, she would give me the childhood she always wanted. This included the best pieces of clothing she could find.

When walking around 44th St in Manhattan, my small eyes landed on a cute pair of overalls, the mannequin and her mom stood side by side holding hands, same height same poise, my mom and I looked back at them, "GAP" said the background drop. I put my hands on the window to view the *overalls* closer, I looked at my mom with excitement. She smiled, having an hour left before work started, she decided we could stop in and look around. We went in and went straight into the fitting room, as I tried on the overalls, I felt the denim jeans *wrap* around my body nicely, almost *loose* fitting, my mother came back into the fitting room wanting me to try a short sleeve white t-shirt. As the mannequin had on. She handed me the shirt and as I *slipped* into the *cotton* fabric, the *pre-shaped* circle neck allowed the *soft* fabric to *wrap* on my neck nicely. Fitting like a puzzle piece around my neck. As I twirled around my garment I fell *in love* with the outfit. My mom instantly bought it

My mother always had to *modify* any outfits to my body, having laid out a white short sleeve, my mother thought the plain white shirt was missing something. As she looked around her drawers of junk she found a small pink bow. With the small pink bow, she decided to sew it in the middle. Allowing it to match the pink flowers on the denim overalls. A white pair of jelly sandals added to the modification of the outfit, and with this, my mom decided my overall *appearance* needed a change as well. “Baby pink nails”, she said. As she added the nail polish and gloss to make them *shiny* and *pop*. Two pigtails were added as well, as she *smoothed* out my baby hair and added *gel* to make it shine. I felt ready to show off my completed look.

Waking up the next day, I went to put on my brand-new outfit. When looking at myself in the little mirror we had in our bathroom, it was like *love* at first sight, hugging myself and *smelling* that denim smell, I looked and felt like a doll. The mannequin at the store was staring right in front of me. I never wanted to take the outfit off. With my baby pink nails, two pigtails, white short sleeves, and white jelly sandals, I wanted to wear this outfit every day. As the days went on that's exactly what I did. I wore those completed looks almost every day, asking my mom to try and recreate different outfits for me, I was *emotionally* attached. With all the hard work I felt my mother put into *modifying* it to my liking, and even *enhancing* my look, I wanted to wear the overalls proudly. This went on for almost six months, half a year, but sadly, as the months went by I grew and gained weight. Although my doctors and family were excited about my growth, I felt sad to lose the one outfit I loved the most. Even with my mother modifying it each time I grew, at some point, I had to let it go.



Chapter 2: Rosado

By the age of six, I wore many other outfits, but that feeling of *loving* an outfit never came back. My mother noticed this and decided it was time for a brand new style, something more feminine, and brighter. Strawberry Shortcake was a popular show that decided to reappear in 2003, but with me being so young, I wasn't able to watch it or understand it, but 3 years later, I became obsessed. I lived in The Bronx at the time, and around each corner of the street, there was always someone selling some kind of Strawberry Shortcake merchandise. Every time I passed by anything related to her, I'd want it. My mother knew then that I needed Strawberry Shortcakes outfits. So, after work and during the weekends in her free time, she would take me to stores like Limited Too, Gap, and Payless. Trying to find the best outfits for me. "Tienen esto en el color rosado?", my mother would ask, "Do you have this in the color pink?" My mom wanted to make sure that everything matched well. When we arrived home, my mother would have me model the clothes for her, modeling a bunch of outfits. As I walked out and looked at myself through the mirror my mother held up for me, I smiled with joy.

As I twisted and turned in the mirror, I kept looking at myself from head to toe, my shoes *slide* in so comfortably, they were *baby pink* flats with a bright pink *encloser* on the side, my jeans were *dark* and *baggy*, stopping right at the heel of my foot, because of this, I had a baby pink *belt* that *gripped* around the loops of my jeans holding them up tight. My long sleeve, pink and white striped shirt *felt* soft like *cotton* and *hugged* me just right. I had this *knitted* almost *yarn-like zippered* sweater that fit oversized, I *wrapped* it around my waist allowing it to *suspend* against my body and help me feel *secure*. My long-sleeve shirt was the center of attention, and my baby pink denim bucket hat which *attached* to my head nicely had the words 'GAP' across it

in hot pink, completed the look. “I look like Strawberry Shortcake,” I told my mom, and while she smiled and nodded she put the mirror down and walked to the bathroom, bringing out her flat iron and nail supplies. My mother believed in appearances, she believed if you looked good, you’ll feel even better. So of course, my hair and nails had to be done.

These *modifications* to my body never affected me in a negative way, they allowed me to *express* myself more and created a bond between my mother and I. Pink was the theme and slowly became my favorite color. My nails were *painted* as such getting the clear coat for extra *shine*, at this age, my hair was longer and fuller. My mother felt that I should be able to let it out freely and show it off. She *flat ironed* my hair and taught me what a *Tubi* was, to *wrap* my hair up at night and keep it nice and straight. As she flat ironed my hair and explained how to do it, the smokey *smell* almost felt warm and homey. I would always watch my mom get her hair done at the hair salon and wondered what it felt like, and why she did it.. As she put *argan oil* on my hair to *silk* it down, the *shine* made my hair look *voluminous*, making me appear taller. The *smell* of the oil and nail polish made me *feel* confident. The first time I understood why getting ready was so important. Once the end of the day came, my hair was wrapped in a Tubi and I was excited for the next day, this outfit became my everyday look.

The Strawberry Shortcake phase eventually went away, but my obsession with the color pink stayed. I grew a very *emotional connection* to the color, the painted nails, the pink shoes, the pink shirt, and the pink bucket hat made me *feel feminine*. This, and with the *modification* of my appearance, allowed me to understand what being *girly* was like. I *connected* with being a girl, I liked being girly, and the *attachment* I grew from the outfit allowed me to see it. The color pink became my go-to when pulling outfits together. To this day, I still try to fit in the color pink

with my everyday outfits. Getting ready became *essential* for me as well. From that day, until now my self-care is getting ready, and feeling good.



Chapter 3: Foreign land

At the age of eight, I was sent off to Mexico for a month to visit family and learn more about my culture. My mother felt that I needed to learn more Spanish, and understand my luck in life compared to my cousins there. Once there though, I paid no mind to what I was supposed to learn but instead decided to have fun. In walking the streets of Mexico City with my family, I noticed a woman selling hand-beaded bags. In the city, there would be rows and rows of people selling items on the street. Women selling bags weren't unusual, but these handmade bags looked and felt different. My cousins stopped, warning me that all they wanted was my money, but I ignored them as I held the bags up and touched each beaded pearl. "Cinco pesos," said the woman, Tewenty-five cents, I remember my mother explaining money to me before I left. As I held the money in my hand I gave her the sign that I was still looking, putting my thinking face on and scratching my chin, I looked around to see what stood out.

A small light green hand-beaded shoulder bag, with white beaded *adhered* all around and *clipped* straps, called my name. As I picked it up I fell in love with the flexibility it had, it wasn't stiff, and it was easy to open and close. As I flipped the white beaded strap, I looked inside the almost mint-colored green bag and saw the mini holes in the gaps between the beads. Feeling the texture, the *tambour beading* felt pointy. As I put it over my shoulders, *suspending* it between my arm and the side of my chest, my body *fills* in the gap between me and the bag. I admired myself, and instantly knew I needed it. Without looking up from the bag I handed the woman the money and walked away with my family. From there, the green bag became a stable piece in everyday my outfits.

At the age of eight, I was becoming self-conscious about my body, I gained a lot of weight over the year, and realized I kept trying to hide my belly and my chubby legs. With my

mom teaching me the value of getting myself ready, I was able to perfect the way I wanted to look by *changing* and *modifying* my hair, nails, and toes, and accessorizing more. All black was my go-to at this time, and as I put on my skin-tight black jeans that *gripped* my legs, and my black *cotton* short sleeve, I knew for my green beaded shoulder bag, I need my nails and toes to be *bright* and pink. Before going out with my family that night, I grabbed the pink nail polish, allowing the color to *highlight* my nail beds, *changing* the *appearance* of my hands. I *adjust* my hair by putting in green *ribbons* at the end and *braiding* it. Putting Argan oil on each strand having the *lingering* scent be my perfume. Allowing myself to *smell* good. As I looked at myself I knew I needed to match my bag, my cousin lent me these green beaded earrings that matched perfectly. As I *inserted* the earring into my *earlobe*, having only one hole in each ear. I admired my *new* look. I was gifted green sketchers from my Tia, and because of this, I was able to *slip* my foot nicely into my brand-new shoes and feel comfortable with my appearance. With my mom not on this trip with me, I had to pick my own outfits, this allowed me to almost build a *costume* for myself. I was no longer in NYC I was somewhere new, I was in a foreign land, so I tried my best to stand out. My mint green hand-beaded shoulder bag tied the outfit all together. The plasticity *smell* of the bag stuck with me, and every time I think of this outfit. I *fall in love* all over again, it was an outfit I built myself, with no opinion but my own.

My insecurity made me believe I had to keep adjusting my appearance. Distracting what others can look at, my all-black go-to outfit was something I felt *attached* to, but my accessories allowed me to *love* myself again. I thought an outfit made you fashionable, but in reality, it was how you put it together that made it. Along with my all-black outfit, I grew an *attachment* to my light green shoulder bag. The beaded bag felt authentic and personal. Once back in NYC I

continued to wear it, I grew fond of bags and purses from the green bag. This *emotional connection* to it allowed my obsession for accessories to never fade.



Chapter 4: Charter School

Middle school was approaching, and at the age of twelve, I had no option but to join a school with uniform restrictions. This was the time I felt the most restricted, not being able to dress the way I wanted to felt unfair. My mother wanted to make sure I started focusing more on my schooling, with her having not been able to attend a middle school, she wanted me to have the best education I could. A charter school that had just opened in the area on 167th in The Bronx. The lesson plans and rules were all laid out and my mother, with no hesitation, signed me away. A month before school started I received my syllabus, “First Day of School ! August 15th, 7 am - 4 pm doors will be open, and Uniforms will be checked. Girls will need to wear a dark blue blouse, khaki pants, black shoes, and a long dark blue cardigan.”As I flipped the brochure and syllabus, I looked at my mother with a terrified look, I hated this uniform. Although I was used to getting what I wanted, my mom was not having any of it, she decided that we would go school shopping the following week.

The week came and we did exactly what she said. We went to stores like Cookies and Flynn O'Hara Uniforms in Westchester. Being in the fitting room, I had on the uniform, the baggy *trumpt-like* khaki jeans that felt rough, the toughness trying to *adhere* to my skin. Because of my fluctuating weight, I was between sizes 6-8. A black stiff leather belt was *wrapped* between each loop around my waist, as I spun around, my mother stopped me and *tightened* the croche part of my pants firmly. Allowing the khakis to be *suspended* against my waist allowing me not to move. A big fat silver buckle in the middle was *closed* and put through the last hole. Already having tucked in the dark navy blue polo shirt, I felt *restricted*. The stiff-knitted *cotton* polo had the big school logo ironed on the left side of it, along with the long *wool* navy blue cardigan, that *dragged* along as I walked. The clothes on my body *hung* unfittingly, I felt like nothing flattered me. I was being restricted from showing or expressing anything. I hated it.

Accessorizing my face and body was the only thing I could *change*. I begged my mom that when I turned thirteen, I could get my ears pierced and dye my hair red. Three holes on each earlobe, and bright red hair. She hesitated but caved in eventually, and agreed only if I made the honor roll. A month after my birthday, I received an honor roll and an award for perfect attendance. My mother was thrilled and a week later took me to Harlem in Manhattan to a piercing shop on 116th. I remember the gun *piercing* percent holes, lining up *neatly*, one on top of the other. My mother then took me to a Dominican hair salon around the corner to get my red highlights. I was finally able to *modify* my body the way I wanted to. Leaving the salon my hair was *voluminous*, *bouncing* every time I walked, the sun *shined* on my hair making it shine and allowing my olive skin tone to *brighten* up as well. I felt proud to put my hair up in a high ponytail, letting my neck feel embraced and showing off my new pierced ears. There were no rules against piercings or hair dye in my school, and with me being only thirteen, I felt like the coolest girl ever. I picked and chose what earrings to wear every morning, *embracing* my features more.

As 7th grade was coming to end, I grew fond of *decorating* my ears and having my hair bright red. At this stage of my life, I fell in love with silver and diamonds and felt like a rebel with my highlights. I grew an attachment to this stage in my life, and silver jewelry made me believe my skin would shine brighter, and my red hair made me look different, I felt almost brand new. These changes allowed me to *express* myself and let others *see* my sexy side. I didn't feel restricted anymore. I *fell in love* with myself and my outfit.



Chapter 5: A Woman

It's 2014, I'm fourteen trying to find myself, and my style. As I walked to the BX6 bus right by the Yankee Stadium to take to school, my eyes wandered around what everyone was wearing, it was a breezy mid-March and the weather was getting warmer. I love mornings because the outfits you see are what people choose hours before the day, maybe even seconds. First impressions to me are everything. In NYC, specifically The Bronx, everyone has their own style. As I looked around I saw everyone wearing skinny jeans. They were slowly becoming the "it" pair of jeans. I knew had to get a pair.

While walking around the mall with my friends that same week, we went into American Eagle, when viewing the mannequin I saw her only wearing a pair of jeans, I decided to try them on in the fitting room, closing the curtains behind me I began putting on the black pair of jeans, having them on I looked at myself in the mirror and saw how skinny I looked, the thin jeans *adhering* to the body. *Wrapping* at the torso from hip to ankle, they felt like the tightest pair of black jeans I ever put on. The *layer* of denim was secured, feeling *smooth* and *fitting* at the touch. The front of the jeans had welted pockets, a straight line that could only be able to insert a quarter-size item in it. When turning my body around, I saw the back had no pockets, giving me a *curvy* look. As I looked down to my ankles, because of my shortness, the jeans scrunched up at the bottom, the jeans *runching* up with the fabric. I fell in love. I never ran to the register so quickly.

My middle school finally allowed black trousers and jeans to class. I was now being of an age that allowed me to wear makeup and more jewelry, a *modification* to my look needed to be made. The school year was coming to an end and although it was the middle of the semester, I knew I wanted to redye my hair. My mother was ecstatic, she immediately took me to the hair

salon near Washington Heights in Manhattan. Sitting in the chair I knew exactly what I wanted, Jet black is what I went for, and towards the end of my session, as the Dominican hairdresser was flattening my hair, My *sleek* dark hair matched the darkness of my new American Apparel jeans, made me smile with glee. As she *wrapped* my hair up in a Tubi allowing my hair not to lose its shine and straightness, I was taken away to the nail section of the store, not only was my hair getting a new change, but my nails needed to be *modified* as well. I wanted my nails to be *clipped* down, *short* and subtle. Ballerina is the *color* I chose, Pastel pink. The next day I woke up early, unraveled my tubi, put on my uniform short sleeve button-up navy collared shirt, and put on my new black jeans. As I turned to look at myself I reached for my *makeup*, adding the finishing touches, mascara, and pink lipgloss. I had *altered* my *appearance* in a way I loved.

I *felt* confident and feminine again. As I walked down the halls of my school and walked into the girl's bathroom, I noticed my friends admiring my new curves and appearance. My confidence was boosted and I felt newer than ever. Eyes were on me and I began understanding what being a female truly meant, I was becoming softer, learning to walk taller and with more movement. My jeans, along with the change in my looks, allowed me to tune into a side of me I never knew I needed to connect with. Becoming a woman.



Chapter 6: Self-love

The school year was coming to an end, finally, it was May and the flowers were blooming, at fourteen, all I wanted to do was stay at home. Around this time I started becoming close friends with a lot of girls from my school, and although we were all going to different high schools, we wanted to spend the summer with each other one last time. The end of June approached us and one of my friends invited us to a family cookout. New Jersey was where her “family home” was. Growing up in NYC and moving from apartment to apartment, I never once thought of my friends living anywhere else. It’s 2015, and in all my years of being in NYC, I had never been outside of it. “Have your best swimwear ready!” My friend texted in our group chat. I immediately went to my mom for permission and fashion advice. I didn’t own any fitting swimwear. For me, what you’ll be swimming in meant everything, but, my biggest insecurity were my curves, they were coming in, and the thought of a two-piece terrified me. As I and my mother were walking around W 34th St, We decided to walk into Victoria's Secret. There I spotted the Triangl Two Piece bikini. We immediately bought it. I was ready to try it on at home.

When we arrived home my mother hand-washed the swimsuit before I tried it on, once dried I put on the infamous Triangl Two-piece, the bottoms were bikini form, and they *adhered* to my body *tightly*, sitting right at my torso just a little above my pelvic area, showing all the curves and bumps I was insecure of. The bottoms were colorful having the sides on the hip area turquoise and the middle a bright peach pink color. The bra-like bikini also had the same colors, with the band being bright peach, the cups for the breast being turquoise and the design being peach. The top felt secure, as I *clipped* the back straps and *tightened* the straps, I *inserted* the padding needed, I saw how my bust area rose up and sat up high. I had never seen my body so put together. The bikini had many *layers* of swim material and almost felt spandex-like. My

mother noticed my unsure face and gave me a basket of cover-ups she had to choose from. As I *wrapped* myself around the mesh and net fabrics, picking through my mother's collection, I put on a white, fully covered arms-to-neck mesh coverup. As I twisted and turned I noticed two strings connected in the back, which allowed me to tie the front and let the cover-up *adhere* to my body even more. I felt confident again.

While adjusting my mesh cover-up, I looked at myself in the mirror and felt almost nude, I was missing *accessories*. I quickly grabbed the red nail polish I had in my room and started *painting* my nails and toes to focus on the colors I had on. Finding my white sandals to match my mesh coverup. Once done, I decided to *tie* my hair back and up, putting it in a high ponytail. I *sprayed* some of my Bombshell Victoria's Secret perfume all over myself, allowing my hair and skin to absorb the fragrance *modifying* my scent. The sweet floral scent followed me as I grabbed my red backpack to match my bright apple-colored nails and carry my essentials. I was ready to be picked up. I finally got the call, "Come downstairs we're here." I ran down kissing my mom goodbye.

When thinking of Summer 2015, being with my friends in New Jersey, swimming in the pool and eating is all I could think about. My first bathing suit wasn't my last and after that day of wearing the Triangl two-piece, I bought more two-pieces and cover-ups. I *felt* free and *felt* a whole different level of confidence not only with what I was wearing but with my body. The lingering smell of the Bombshell perfume by Victoria's Secrets is something that has brought back great *memories* whenever I smell it. Happiness and self-love are what I learned to admire after that summer.



Chapter 7: 9th grade

Still in 8th grade, at fourteen years old, I needed to start applying to high schools, I knew I wanted to explore New York more. I wanted to get out of The Bronx and view the big city. I applied to all the High schools I could find in Manhattan, and a little school right on Wall Street caught my eye. Orientation day came around, and as I viewed the charging bull locking eyes with me while crossing the street, a line of staff and teachers waited for me with colorful signs and readiness. I knew this school was the one. It checked everything off my list, especially **no uniforms**. As the months went by I awaited the acceptance letter. Finally, I received it, “Congratulations, You’ve been accepted!” All I could think about were the outfits I would finally be able to wear.

August approached and I had to find an outfit for the first day of school. I wanted to play it safe and not bring attention to myself. I decided to go into my closet and find something simple. All black is what I chose. I picked out a black pair of ripped jeans, the *tightness* of the jeans *adhered* to my body nicely, high-waisted, and the buttons stopped above my belly button allowing me to have a more snatched waist. The *distress* of the jeans allowed the hem to hang, I wanted the cuts to give off a messy look, so I grabbed my scissors, *clipped* some uneven strings that were too long, and cut some more *slips* to make more holes. I admired my work viewing my work. I decided a black crop top would be fitting. The simple yet smooth short sleeve black crop top felt lightweight, everything look *fitted* and felt comfortable. I looked around my room for shoes and decided on a black and white pair of checkered Vans. They slipped on easily as I put my foot in, the *layered* patting at the sole felt like I was walking on clouds.

I decided my outfit needed some sort of modification, the simplicity of it needed something more, I decided to put on some jewelry, most of my friends believed that my brown

skin and gold jewelry suited me better, but I disagreed with them. Silver jewelry allowed me to shine brighter, I loved the feel and simplicity of a silver necklace or silver tennis bracelet. I added these items to my look, a Pandora silver bracelet, and a silver tennis bracelet were on my wrist. Along with these pieces, I decided to put on this silver necklace that had a pendant on it. It was gifted to me by my mother, allowing me to *alter* how I looked completely. I decided to let my hair down, my naturally straight hair felt *silky* smooth as I brushed through it, I *added* argan oil to it allowing it to *glow* more. As I looked down at my hands, I noticed how bare my nails were, I decided to *clip* them, I enjoyed the *shortness* I was creating for them. For paint, I painted them pink, my favorite color. My look was complete.

Walking in on the first day, I tried my best to not stand out. I was confused about where I stood, with no friends, and no familiarity. I felt *lonely*. My outfit *reflected* this. The first day was hard, but as the day went by I noticed I wasn't the only lonely person. Besides the loneliness, I realized many of us had similar outfits. Maybe none of us wanted to stand out as well. All black of my outfit allowed me to *camouflage* in a way that made me feel comfortable. I was *content* with this.



Chapter 8: Lavish

Freshman year was finishing up quickly, It was the end of January, exams were coming up and the cold days were hitting us hard. With me just turning fifteen, my Mexican roots would define me as a young lady. Ready for the next step of womanhood. I had a choice between a quinceanera or receiving money. Of course, I chose the money. Online shopping was becoming popular during 2016, many Influencers were rising and it was a time when social media was becoming the 'IT' thing. I followed many Youtubers and IG models. All of them have expensive and nice things. I decided to follow in their footsteps and get myself something special as a birthday gift. As I searched online, I found a coat and a purse. An all-black Longchamp Le Pliage Large Recycled Nylon Shoulder Bag and an Expedition Fusion-Fit Coyote Fur-Trim Parka Canadian Goose. With the weather always changing in NYC I decided the splurge was necessary. After placing my order, I waited for it to arrive.

The day came when my items arrived in the mail. As I opened up my packages I first pulled out my coat. A Canadian goose, with the goose feathers on the hood *bouncing* softly with every movement, the *flare* of the feathers gave the coat a very mature look. Expensive but clean. As I looked inside I saw the many pockets it had, along with the many *layers* it had inside for warmth. When feeling the layered fabric inside, I could feel the goose feathers that were *inserted*. Once I put the coat on I felt the *heaviness* of it, as I zippered it up, the hood and coat covered my neck and made me warmer, the heat of the coat made me take it off immediately. I knew I made the right choice. After hanging the coat, I opened the next package which was the Longchamp purse. I felt the *rubberiness* on the inside, the outside had its *minimalist silhouette* which carried on as I put it over my shoulders. As I put the two items together, the *bond* between the two felt perfect.

My two items were everything I wanted, and with the days becoming extremely cold, and snow increasing more. I decided that for school I didn't need much of a change in appearance but more comfort. The simple *accessories* I added were a black beanie for my head, some black mittens for my hands that *clipped* on and off for easier access, and a black, short scarf, that only *wrapped* around my neck and nothing more. I considered my phone to be an add-on to my outfit, the case specifically. The color I picked for it was pastel pink. A *smooth* case that at the touch felt like nothing was covering it. My boots were grey, long, and from UGGS, sturdy and heavy for the snow. Not many people were going to notice me in this outfit, so I chose to make my choice of fragrance the *modification*. Versace Bright Crystal was a perfume my mother always had on. The floral almost sweet smell gave me comfort and so I decided to *lather* myself with it before leaving for school. This became my go-to outfit, and I loved it.

My coat and purse were one of the biggest purchases I ever made, and are two of the things I continue to wear from freshman year of high school until now. At the moment of receiving the items and trying them on, I felt *lavish*. I understood the meaning of *luxury*. The influence of my getting the items was strong, many say to not follow others' footsteps, but I felt this attachment when it came to shopping, especially online. I soon learned the meaning of what a shopping addiction was. So after this, I decided it was time to get a job, and understand *independence*. I felt *proud* of myself for investing in long-term items.



Chapter 9: Senior Year

Becoming an adult felt weird. Turning 18 and preparing to have more freedom than ever didn't feel right, I was still unsure of who I really was, and who I wanted to become. As I walked to school in the Wall Street area of NYC, the big RRG lights from my school lit up, waiting for me. As I passed the bowling green and walked to the entrance I felt ready for senior year. High School had flown by and although I wasn't ready for college, I felt I needed to grow up and try to understand who I wanted to be. Many of the kids in my school had been following trends all over social media, Instagram had become popular, along with Twitter so many of us were wearing the same outfits. I was still believing in buying expansive and long-term pieces, so once the bell rang and the weekend came, I decided I needed to buy a new outfit.

As I walked around H&M, American Eagle, Nike, and Victoria's Secret, I randomly grabbed items that I felt would fit me correctly. When I got home and looked at the items I chose to try on, I soon realized black was the theme. As I reached down into my shopping bags, I pulled out a black pair of leggings, the *spandex* material was something I never felt before. As I *squeezed* into the leggings, the thin layer felt smooth to the touch, almost feeling like *polyester*, allowing my legs to *slip* in with ease, already *preshaped* to how my body is. I felt the *enhancement* of my bottom be *lifted* and *shaped* into a more *plump* look, I felt grown. I next pulled out a *cotton*, low-neck tank top, when putting it on the fitting of the neck felt open, allowing my chest and breast area to poke out, *accentuating* my curves and *hugging* me in the right places. As I twisted and turned on my mirror I felt a bit insecure, as I looked through my bags I pulled out a long grey jersey knit cardigan. As I *wrapped* it around me and *inserted* my arms through the *soft* holes, I felt more confident and myself. Black Nike Vapormax, were in style, so I decided to buy myself a pair. Now I felt ready for senior year.

I enjoyed *modifying* my look, even when I wasn't feeling my best. My appearance meant a lot to me, it's what I felt everyone first looked at, and what I felt everyone would admire first. On the nights before school I would always do a blowout and pin my hair up, allowing my hair to have a *bouncy* look to them, and adding hairspray for a *shiny* and *voluminous* look. I started enjoying doing my makeup, but because I was learning, Mascara and lipgloss were my go-to. I individually would coat my lashes *upwards*, allowing my lashes to get a *darker* coat as the wand runs through them. Adding pink lipgloss completed my look, I felt pretty, feminine, and gentle. My Bright Crystal *Perfume* would fill the air every time I used it. These *enhancements* reminded me of my age and the beauty of what getting ready meant.

My comfortable outfit, allowed me to *bond* with my lazy side. I became invested in buying clothes more for *comfort* than for looks. Athleisure wear started becoming expectedly popular, and with the senior year being a tough year, I grew an emotional attachment to these simple pieces. My black leggings and tank top, my grey cardigan, and my Nike Vapormaxes allowed me to be bougie on a budget. The modifications I did to my appearance allowed me to become more attached to these comfortable outfits, and feel amazing about them. I knew this would be the beginning of amazing growth for my fashion sense.



Chapter 10: Adulthood

It's 2019 and at Nineteen now in college, I decided to stay in the city. City Tech is the college I chose and Brooklyn was a borough I always wanted to travel to more often. I was unsure of what I wanted to major in, but I knew it had to involve fashion. With my travels on the subway from The Bronx to Brooklyn, the long commute made me lose my interest in what I wanted to wear, I was excited to go to campus and show off my outfits, but with the huge adjust meant from High School to college, and having to understand what college was really about. As a first-generation student, picking out what to wear every morning was the last thing on my mind. As the days went by, and I looked into my closet, the same outfit spoke my name. Sweat pants, long sleeve shirt, and slides were my go-to.

As I put on my grey Nike Tech sweats and *inserted* my legs into the soft *organic cotton* fabric, I felt *wrapped* with warmth as the fabric hung perfectly. The grey sweats allowed me to move comfortably without feeling exposed. My grey Uniqlo long-sleeve shirt matched perfectly with my Nike sweats, the soft *cotton* shirt *clung* to my body *snugging* me in and allowing my curves to show through. I would tuck in the grey long sleeve and allow the strings of the sweat to *tighten* around my waist, as I pulled the strings, I would try to *shape* my waist into looking tinier. Once it was tied, I would grab a clean pair of grey socks, and as I would *slide* into my *nylon* material socks, I would also put on my cream Yeezy slides. The soft almost *cushion-like* slides, *wrapped* around my foot perfectly, allowing my foot to have security and feel comfortable while walking.

The transition was not easy for me, the *modifications* I did to myself did not help in how I wanted to feel. Confidence and femininity are what I would aim for when adding my accessories. Sadly, I would end up with the opposite. As I tried managing my time and new schedule, I would

always end up with a *lazy* bun, *parting* my hair down the middle, allowing there to be a *clear* line of division. *Slicking* my hair back with gel, allowing there to be a *smooth shine* that glossed over my head, and tying my low bun together in the back, allowing my neck to feel short as the bun touched it. I was unsure of where my style was at this point. I became less excited to put on jewelery, even allowing some of my pierced earring holes to close up. The pain of having to reopen my earring holes frustrated me, so I used *clip-on* silver earrings that would *pinch* my earlobes, as the earrings *hung* onto my skin, the fake diamond earrings not only made me itch but felt worse than piercing them did.

I grew a weird and emotional attachment to my Nike Tech sweatpants, I wanted them in different colors, and wanted the *comfort* to be able to move around and feel at home. I felt a sort of *sadness* realizing this emotional attachment because I had imagined my fashion sense would have bettered me or made me feel more *empowered*. Turning nineteen was a big change for me. I wanted to be sure I knew what I was doing and how I could improve. Fashion came second and it was something I was not used to. This became my realization of adulthood.



Chapter 11: My 20s

At twenty my mother noticed my lack of effort in getting ready, my excitement for it wasn't there anymore. She tried to cheer me up by taking us thrift shopping. At a very young age, an age that I can't remember much of, my mother would thrift our clothing at a local thrift shop at 161 Yankee Stadium in The Bronx. She hated the idea of it and would work hard to be able to buy new and better quality clothes. Of course, my mother at the time didn't know that there was a variety of thrift in NYC, and in finding this discovery, she decided we should visit a thrift store by 86th St. in Manhattan. We went in and sure enough, all there were was designer stuff and good quality items. I was stunned. Vintage, good item clothing for half the price? I was sold. As I walked around admiring the clothes and picking pieces out, I spotted this all-black polo jumper, as I grabbed it, I turned to find all-black LOFT wide-leg trousers. I felt amazed on how quickly I was finding the items. I quickly bought them, and after returning home, and washing all the clothes, I realized my old self was back.

As I bent down into the dryer, I picked out the Polo black jumper first. As I *inserted* my arms into the jumper, I felt the warmth from the dryer *wrap* against my body, the black jumper felt smooth, and the *nylon knit* fabric allowed for a *soft* feel. The *Embroidered* POLO logo was shiny and had a rubber look to it. It felt sleek and smooth. Once I took the wide-leg trousers out I tried them on, the *loose* almost *bell-shaped* bottom allowed for comfort, and easy movement. As I *clipped* the buttons together, closing and *zippering* up my pants, I felt happy with my items. It had been a while since I felt like I loved an outfit. This simple yet modern outfit allowed me to find exactly what I was looking for. My body felt safe and I felt that although you could not see my curves, the outfit allowed me to view myself as much more mature. Entering my 20s came with a new perspective.

My confidence came back and as I looked at myself in the mirror, I admired my naturally straight hair and decided to *enhance* my natural looks. As I brushed through my hair and pulled out my mascara, my small *modifications* started to make a huge change. I felt more brighter and feminine again. Adding argan oil to my hair allowed for my natural *shine* to come through. As I coated my lashes, with each coat *wrapping* around each eyelash strand, it allowed my eye area to darken. Giving me the *appearance* of having bigger eyes. I put on some simple pink lipgloss, and I decided to finally paint my nails, and as I *clipped* my nails to be shorter, I grabbed my favorite color of nail polish. Pink. With each coat, I was reminded of why I loved the color so much. Once I added the top clear coat, giving it that *shine* it needed, I sprayed my favorite Bright Crystal Perfume and allowed the air around me to *smell* just like it. My *scent* became a part of my *modification* and it allowed me to walk confidently.

The quality of clothing mattered to me the most. I instantly became attached to this, emotionally attached. I was prepared to spend my money on good quality clothing. Trying to invest in more pieces that I know will last me. My style became more conservative, not only was I looking for more modern pieces, but I was also looking for that comfortability. My mother helped me in finding my love for fashion again. The attachment that I had with this outfit also had to do with the happiness it brought me after feeling lost and unmotivated to dress. I was able to find my balance.



Chapter 12: Love This Outfit

Now, at twenty-one, and in my last year of college. My style has changed drastically from then and now. I would consider my style to be more classic and mature. I got rid of skinny jeans, and tight shirts, and decided that comfortability was the way to go. Instead of sweats and tight leggings, I invested in better quality items that I knew would last me a while. Trousers, Wide leg jeans, good-quality shirts, blouses, and sweaters are all that I wear now. I have learned how to master comfortability with style. Allowing my laziness to still look put together. One of my favorite outfits that I'm currently always wearing now is my black Express trousers, my cream L.L Bean turtle neck sweater, and my brown ugg.

Today, as I finish my skincare adding just another step to my *appearance*, I pull out my go-to outfit. As I *slide* my legs into the Black Trouser pants from Express, I feel the softness of the *cotton* and *wool* coming together as my legs brush against it. The preshaped pants allow for my legs and bottom area to have room and make me *appear* taller than I am. As I *zipped* up my pants and button them up, I reach over to put on my knitted cream turtle neck sweater from L.L Bean. As I *insert* my arms and chest into the *baggy* sweater, the turtle neck almost folds perfectly already shaping the extra *merino wool* fabric nicely. As my hands escape, the sleeves have a *bell-bottom* shape to them. Allowing the sweater to *hang* more *relaxed* on my body. As I take my hair out I'm left with putting on my Classic Ultra Mini Chestnut Uggs. My feet slide in smoothly feeling the *faux fur wrap* around my feet. As I look at myself in the mirror, I tell myself, as I always do now, "I love this outfit."

My *straight* hair allows for my *appearance* to look more *mature*. I tend to brush my hair and put oil in it for the strands that stick out. In helping *modify* my look more, I try exposing my ears, allowing the focus to be my whole face, and pushing back my hair. I am still no expert at

doing my *makeup* but as I take out my brush I add a little bit of blush to my cheeks and mascara to my eyes, allowing a *glow* to *appear* and a youthful face to *brighten*. My short pink nails let my hands *appear* longer and more delicate. Before walking out the door, I use my new Glossier perfume, spraying it to the back of my neck and on my wrists. *Enhancing* my scent and allowing it to linger on.

The simplicity of this outfit brings me joy. I'm not sure if my style will change, but I have grown an emotional attachment to all my outfits, from the past to now. It has allowed me to figure out what I'm feeling, why I pick the outfits that I do and the meaning behind all of it. Each outfit from this book including my recent one has impacted me in a way I never thought clothes could. I was able to find my identity and figure out my femininity, along with my confidence. Picking and choosing an outfit can be hard, but that one good outfit, the one you catch yourself always trying to wear, is what makes fashion worth it in my opinion. I have gained a lot of excitement and even some sadness with some outfits. They all remind me that clothes are part of our identity, and no one can take that opinion away from us.



Bibliography

Roach-Higgins, Mary Ellen, et al. *Dress, and Identity*. Fairchild Publications, 1995.

SketchBook App, Apple Store

About the Author



Xinicol Gonzalez was born in NYC, having been raised in The Bronx, the city where she wanted to stay. She is currently a student at New York City College of Technology, City University of New York. Majoring in Business & Technology of Fashion.

Marketing is something she has recently been interested in. She is hoping to find a career path that leads to more creativity and more admiration within the fashion industry!