Rainbow School for Girls
Student Diaries
E. B Stevenson
A "New Woman" Novel

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Persons seeking gender reassignment surgery, hormone therapy or any other medical and/or body-altering process should seek the counsel of a qualified therapist who follows the Benjamin Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorder. This material is intended for persons over the age of 18 only.

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THE RAINBOW SCHOOL FOR GIRLS: Student Diaries

by E.B. Stevenson

One: Georgette "Gloria" McArthur, Seventh Grade, Baltimore Campus

August 27: I have just finished my first day of school at the Rainbow School for Girls' campus in Baltimore. The view of Chesapeake Bay is just beautiful. The campus is just beautiful, celebrating the area's Colonial American heritage. It is much different from the school and the life I left behind in rural West Virginia.

I'm a twelve-year-old seventh grader who's a ward of the court in the State of West Virginia. Both of my parents are serving prison sentences. My father,

George McArthur, is serving a sentence of twenty-five years to life for production and distribution of methamphetamines. He cooked the drug out of our home outside of Beckley, in one of the poorest sections of the state. After losing his job at the coal mines when I was six years old, this was the only kind of work he could get. My mother, Renee McArthur, is serving a sentence of twenty years to life for her part in a prostitution ring operating out of Charleston.

My two brothers, George and Roger, are living with my Uncle Greg and Aunt Heidi in a suburb of Frankfurt, Germany. I got the nickname "Gloria" from a 1980 movie about a woman bent on revenge. I was very tough, like the title character in that movie. None of my aunts and uncles would take me in, since I was very much a tomboy. I wore blue jeans and T-shirts instead of the fashions most girls wear. I often got into trouble at school; I was suspended for a week for pushing a special needs boy down at the school I attended in Beckley while I was in the fifth grade, just days before our place was busted by federal authorities. Our mother was busted in a sting operation just as I was coming off that suspension.

Two weeks before, on August 13, I faced a judge in Charleston to hear the decision on my case. "Georgette Marie McArthur, you have shown that you have behaved in a very unfeminine manner while you've been living with your Uncle Gus in Beckley. Since he is your only relative in West Virginia, and that he can't take you in because of his situation resulting from being injured in a mining accident, he has asked that you become a ward of the court. He also requested that you be put in a school that will teach you to be a proper young lady. It is the decision of this court that you be made a ward of the court, sending you to The Rainbow School for Girls in Baltimore, Maryland. There, you will not only learn the

academics you need, but also be taught in the proper deportment and manners for a member of the feminine persuasion. We have been able to get you in for the fall semester; the academic year begins two weeks from today. You are to report to the school for seventh grade orientation on August 23 at noon. You will be at the school until you graduate from high school," the judge explained.

It was around seven o'clock on the morning of August 23 that a car from the school parked in front of my uncle's house to take me to Baltimore. I packed my clothes and worldly goods in two bags. I decided to wear my navy blue T-shirt, a pair of faded blue jeans, a pair of white athletic socks and a pair of red basketball shoes. "Gloria McArthur, I'm Hazel Whitman, a guidance counselor at Rainbow. I'm here to take you to Baltimore," she informed me.

"Could I put my bags in the trunk?" I asked her.

"Sure thing," she replied.

She drove one of the cars from the school; a brand new Ford Taurus with Maryland plates, "RSFG 13". I soon found out that "RSFG" stood for The Rainbow School for Girls, and this is the thirteenth car of the fourteen-car fleet assigned to pick up new students. As we got on Interstate 64, Hazel asked me: "What brings you to Rainbow?"

"I'm a ward of the court here in West Virginia. I've been sent to your school by court order," I replied before I produced a copy of the court order.

"We get nearly forty percent of our students via court order. Most of the students we get due to court orders come from Maryland and Virginia, but we also get quite a few from West Virginia. We also get wards of the court from all areas of Pennsylvania except the

northwest part and northeast corner of the state, as well as southern New Jersey, the eastern part of North Carolina, the northeastern part of South Carolina, southeastern Ohio, eastern Kentucky and northeastern Tennessee. For example, the students from northwest Pennsylvania, including Erie, are sent to our campus in Chicago. Those from places like Allentown and Bethlehem are sent to our campus on Long Island. Our home campus is in San Francisco, overlooking the Pacific Ocean. In addition to Baltimore, Long Island, Chicago and San Francisco, we also have urban campuses in Los Angeles, Seattle and Tampa Bay, as well as our Rocky Mountain campus in Casper, Wyoming, our Midwest campus in Dittmer, Missouri, forty-five minutes from St. Louis, and our North Georgia campus in the mountains, an hour north of Atlanta," she explained.

"What's the makeup of the student body?" I asked her.

"At this campus, we have 500 students. Forty-five percent of those, or 225 students, are wards of the court, like you. They have been removed from abusive situations, have had both parents incarcerated, have relatives who are unable to care for them and provide them a decent education, or are sent from unhealthy environments at home. Fifty-five percent of our student body, or 275 students, are transgender. They are at various stages of transitioning from boys to girls. About half of this year's seventh graders are transgender girls. Some have been sent here by the courts, but most are referred to by a parent, psychologist, psychiatrist or a social worker. Many start their transitional periods in seventh grade; some start transitioning from boys to girls later on. Many have gender reassignment surgery during their stay at Rainbow; only a handful wait until they graduate from high school before having their operations," she explained.

"Exactly what brings a transgender girl to your school?"

"Gloria, many are looking for a safe place to learn. They are bullied in public schools in their hometown because of their effeminate ways. Some have been assaulted by their classmates. These girls have what professionals call gender identity disorder. They may have male bodies, but strongly identify as female. They go through hormone replacement therapy. The male hormones are replaced with female hormones, in which the outward feminine features develop. The person will develop breasts, and have more feminine hips and buttocks. At our school, they are also taught the finer points of being girls. For at least a year, these young ladies go through what is known as the Real Life Test, in which they live, dress and go to school full-time as girls. After two years of living full-time as girls, and they have demonstrated that there is no doubt that they can adjust to life as girls, they have what is called gender reassignment surgery. This is where the male genitals are removed, and female genitals created."

"To some, it may sound gross. I'll get used to this as time goes on."

"Since you have shown very tomboyish behavior, you will also be taught the finer points of feminine behavior and deportment. I don't know how long it's been since you've worn a skirt, but wearing a skirt is required. Our skirts are plaid with emphasis on the blues and greens. Also part of the uniform is a white blouse, a pair of black flats or pumps, depending on your height, and, since you are a seventh grader, a pair of white knee-high socks. Socks are required for seventh and eighth graders; they are optional for the high school girls, who can wear nylon stockings or pantyhose. We also have white thermal tights for those cold days. All of the uniforms will be issued by

the school; five uniforms will be issued to you. You will also be learning to do your household chores, such as doing the laundry, cleaning your dorm rooms and watching out for your roommates."

"How many people will I be sharing a room with?"

"You will be sharing a room with three other girls; at least one of those will be a transgender girl. Each dorm room has two bedrooms and two bathrooms, a kitchen, and a combination dining and living room. Your roommates will become your best friends. All of your roommates will be in the same grade as you are."

"This will be a new experience."

When I arrived at the school, I was shown to the visitors' quarters by Hazel. "The blonde in the red dress is the one you go to; her name is Olivia. She will get your paperwork processed," she told me.

I walked over to the desk, and showed my paperwork. "Miss McArthur, welcome to Rainbow. I'm Olivia Jones; I'm one of the guidance counselors; I handle our students who are wards of the court," she told me.

"I'm glad to be here," I said.

"I'd take it you left a poverty-stricken town in West Virginia. You must have left a very bad situation there," Olivia added.

"My Uncle Gus isn't able to take care of me because of his health. Both of my parents are in jail."

"What are your parents incarcerated for?"

"My father is in prison for the manufacture and distribution of meth; my mother is behind bars for her part in a prostitution ring in Charleston."

While she processed my paperwork, she got the key to a room in the visitors' quarters. "Is this traditional for the incoming seventh graders?" I asked her.

"Incoming seventh graders stay in these quarters the first night; they're assigned their permanent quarters after orientation," she replied.

After she finished processing my paperwork, she said: "Gloria, you're in Room 227; it's on the second floor." She also gave me several pamphlets and booklets to read. "Each of these books details our student policies, rights and responsibilities and our academic policies. Read these publications before orientation tomorrow morning at ten o'clock," she added before calling a student worker to the desk.

The student who came to the desk to show me to my temporary quarters was a tall blonde girl. "Gloria McArthur, I'm Fawn McKenzie; I'm a junior at Rainbow," she said to me.

"It's a pleasure to meet you," I told her.

"Where do you come from?" she then asked.

"I'm from a rural area near Beckley, West Virginia. I'm a ward of the court," I replied.

"Were you born male or female?"

"I was born female. I consider myself a tomboy."

"I began life as a boy. My name was Faron when I was born; I spent the first twelve years of my life in Staunton, Virginia. From the time I was three years

old, I knew I should have been a girl. I first dressed as a girl when I was four; I put on a white flower girl's dress that my sister, Fran, wore when she was four years old. By the time I was ten years old, I was going to school as Faron, and living at home as Fawn, the girl I felt I should have been to begin with. I was picked on in school because of my feminine ways. Finally, when I finished sixth grade, I told my parents and sister I wanted to become a girl. With the help of my therapist, I entered this school in seventh grade, where I began living, dressing and going to school full-time as a girl. My parents helped me with the legal name change from Faron James McKenzie to Fawn Jennifer McKenzie. After I finished the eighth grade, my mother took me to Philadelphia for gender reassignment surgery. I decided to stay and help my transgender sisters adjust to life as girls. I'm sure there will be someone who will help you learn the finer points of being a girl."

"I'll be looking forward to being a more proper girl. I'll definitely need to be more feminine than I am now."

When I got into my temporary quarters, Fawn helped me with my bags. "If you need anything, call the front desk," she told me before I crashed on the bed and got a nap before reading the material. Just as I was reading the material, my lunch was delivered: a ham sandwich with potato chips and a pitcher of unsweetened iced tea. I spent the whole afternoon looking over the material before my dinner was delivered around six o'clock. I was served baked chicken and salad. I continued to read over the material before I turned on the television set in my room to watch the news; I fell asleep around eleven-thirty.

I got up at approximately eight-thirty the next morning; I decided to wear my pink polo shirt, a pair of blue jeans, a pair of ankle-high socks and a pair of

white sneakers. I had my bags packed before I left the room; I went downstairs to the guests' dining room to have a donut and a glass of milk before I went to the auditorium for new student orientation. The majority of the students coming in were seventh graders, although there were quite a few high school freshmen in this group. At ten o'clock, a blonde-haired woman of medium height and average build walked on the stage. She was wearing a paisley print summer dress and a pair of white sandals.

"Good morning ladies, I'm Daphne Tremaine. I'm the Headmistress. I'd like to welcome you new students to The Rainbow School for Girls' Baltimore campus, also known as Rainbow-Baltimore. We're glad you are joining us for an educational experience like no other. I've been the Headmistress here for the last three years; before that, I taught Social Studies at Rainbow's campuses in Chicago, St. Louis and Tampa Bay before coming here to Baltimore. I live in Annapolis with my husband, John, a professor of History at the Naval Academy, and our daughters, Julie, seventeen years old, and Danielle, thirteen years old. I hold Bachelor's degrees in Social Work and History from Harvard, and a Master's degree in Education Administration from Northwestern University," she informed us.

The first question she asked was what grades we were in; nearly sixty percent of the hands that went up were seventh graders, of which I am one. The second largest group to raise their hands was the high school freshmen, making up about one-third of the new students. A few of the hands that went up were from the eighth graders; only one high school sophomore raised her hand.

The next question was which states we were from. Half of the students raised their hands when asked if they were from Maryland. A quarter of the students

were from Virginia, with smaller numbers from Delaware, New Jersey, North Carolina and Ohio. I was one of only two girls from West Virginia who raised their hands.

When she asked which students are wards of the court, forty percent of the group had their hands raised, including me. The other girl from West Virginia had her hand up. The last question was which ones were born male, and which ones were born female. I was clearly in the minority; two thirds of the girls who raised their hands were born male. After going over the rules, regulations, rights and responsibilities, I went to be measured for my school uniform. I was issued seven red plaid skirts, a similar number of white blouses, red leggings, white stockings, white panties and bras, black and red pumps, white sneakers, and white half and full slips. After getting our school uniforms, I stood in line for the key to my dorm room and my class schedule. I got a room in Dormitory One; the number on the key ring was 1327. I would be on the third floor of the four-story building, with a room facing Chesapeake Bay.

The other girl from West Virginia was waiting for me. She was fourteen years old, five-three with long blonde hair, a slender build and wearing a red body suit, blue denim skirt and a pair of red flats. "Gloria McArthur?" she asked me.

"I'm Gloria McArthur," I replied.

"I'm Ruth Stevens; I've got a key to Room 1327," she added."

"I also have a key to that same room," I added before I asked her what part of West Virginia she came from.

"I'm originally from Wheeling. It's in the far northern part of the state, within ten minutes of both Ohio and Pennsylvania."

"I come from Beckley, in the southern part of the state. So many people work in coal mining there."

"How did you become a ward of the court?"

"My parents are both in prison, Ruth. My father is in prison for manufacturing, possession and sale of methamphetamines; my mother is in prison for her part in a prostitution ring. The court sent me here"

"My mother is an alcoholic, Gloria. She's right now at a rehab facility near Altoona. My father is living in Germany with his present wife. He is very good about paying child support. Since I have no other relatives nearby, the court sent me here; my father went along with the decision."

"Were you born a boy or a girl?"

"I was born a girl. I've shown some aggressive tendencies."

"I was also born a girl; I'm free to admit I'm a tomboy."

Just before Ruth and I entered the building, another one of our roommates met up with us. Thirteen years old, she's five-four with shoulder-length red hair, wearing a mauve summer dress and a pair of white flats. "My key is for Room 1327. Are you my roommates?" she asked us.

"I'm Gloria McArthur," I replied.

"I'm Ruth Stevens," Ruth added.

"I'm Tiffany Wenzel. I'm an eighth grader from Portsmouth, Ohio," she added.

"Gloria and I are both West Virginia girls."

"I'm from Beckley; Ruth hails from Wheeling."

"Were you both born girls?" Tiffany asked us.

"I was born a girl. I displayed some aggressive tendencies when I was in regular school in Wheeling," Ruth replied.

"I was also born a girl; I'm a tomboy," I added.

"I was born a boy. Until I finished the sixth grade, I was known as Timothy, or Timmy for short. I knew I should have been a girl from the time I was two and a half years old. I have two older sisters who dressed me up in their old dresses. I was held back a year in fourth grade because of my gender identity disorder; I finally told my family of my decision last spring. I was referred here by my therapist; I plan to transition to a girl while I'm here, and hopefully have my operation when I finish the eighth grade," Tiffany explained.

"We're glad you're here, Tiffany," Ruth said with a smile.

"We'll be here for you," I added.

"Do we have to wait for another person?" Ruth asked.

"We have one more person to wait for. We went through the line to be fitted for our school uniforms," Tiffany replied.

That fourth person approached us as we were getting ready to get in line to check in to our dormitory. Twelve years old, she's five-two, with long blonde hair, wearing a baby blue sundress and a pair of white sandals. "Room 1327?" she asked us.

"We're in 1327," I replied.

"I'm Amanda Pierce from Arlington, Virginia," she added.

"I'm Tiffany Wenzel from Portsmouth, Ohio," Tiffany then added.

"I'm Ruth Stevens from Wheeling, West Virginia," Ruth informed us.

"I'm Gloria McArthur from Beckley, West Virginia," I told them.

"Were you born male or female?" Tiffany asked her.

"I was born male. My parents gave me the name Armand at birth. I hated being called Army. My two older sisters dressed me up in their old dresses as much as they could; it started when I was two years old. It was at that time I first knew I should have been a girl. I was teased because of my effeminate ways in elementary school; by the time I was in fourth grade, I was going to school as a boy and living at home as Amanda. Just three months ago, I told my parents and sisters I wanted to become a girl. My parents and my therapist referred me to this school. My family is just forty-five minutes from here," Amanda explained.

The four of us piled our new uniforms and our luggage onto one cart. The four of us hauled it into the front door; it was a short walk to the desk at the front entrance, where we showed our new student ID

cards. We were shown to the elevator by another student; we took the elevator to the third floor. Our dorm room already had a television set, DVD player, digital cable converter with DVR, and a stereo system. Ruth and I would share a room, while Amanda and Tiffany would share another.

It was six-thirty this morning that I got up; I was in my red night shirt and a pair of shorts. Ruth was half asleep in the bed across from mine. I walked over to her bed to awaken her. "Ruth, it's six-thirty; time to get up!" I said to her.

She looked at her alarm clock. "Oh, my gosh! It is time to get up!" she exclaimed, realizing that she forgot to set the alarm. I took my shower first; I was out within ten minutes. While Ruth was in the shower, I put on my school uniform. I looked in the mirror; I thought I looked and felt the most feminine since kindergarten. Ruth emerged from our bathroom in her school uniform. Red skirts, white blouses, white stockings and red pumps were our standard uniform for summer. Tiffany and Amanda were all ready by the time we left our dorm room for the cafeteria. As with the other Rainbow campuses, the buildings were connected via underground tunnels as well as outdoor walking paths. We stayed indoors, out of the stifling heat, as we walked to the cafeteria. All four of us opted for whole wheat toast, oatmeal and orange juice.

The first class of the day was Feminine Deportment. In that class, I got an introduction to the application of makeup, something I wasn't taught to do by any of my female relatives. About sixty percent of my classmates in that class were transgender. Our teacher, Miss Chandler, is also transgender; she worked as a fashion model in Paris and Milan before coming to Baltimore. Second hour was our Social Studies class with Mr. Lamarche, a first year teacher

who had just graduated from a university in his native Quebec. We started with an introduction to urban life in the United States. Third hour was our Physical Education class; our coach, Mrs. Keller, had been an assistant women's basketball coach at an NCAA Division I school in the Midwest. We began with calisthenics, followed by an introduction to gymnastics. The seventh grade was the first class to head to lunch; I had a tuna salad sandwich, a vegetable plate and a pint of milk. After lunch was our English class with Mr. Roy, a former small town newspaper reporter from upstate New York. Our first class was on sentence structure. Fifth hour was our French class with Miss Lemaire, a first year teacher who came to the United States from Bordeaux, France; the first lecture was on basic words and phrases translated to French from English. Sixth hour was our study period; I got to work on my English homework; when I got done, I started on my French homework. Seventh hour was Mathematics with Mrs. O'Brien, who had taught in the school system in Washington, DC before coming to Rainbow in Baltimore. After our classes were done, we had our support group. I was in a support group with fourteen other troubled girls.

One of the girls in our support group was Mary Jane Carlton, who had been referred to the school by the court in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina after her parents were sent to prison for their part in a murder-for-hire plot. "Coming from a small town in North Carolina, I never thought I would be in a school where half of my classmates were transitioning from boys to girls. It's an entirely new situation for me; it's going to take some getting used to," she told the group.

"Mary Jane, I know where you're coming from. I grew up in a small town in West Virginia. I only heard about transgender people from what I saw on televi-

sion; I thought I had seen everything. I was also referred to this school by the courts. The first thing I was told was to expect to share my living quarters with two transgender girls. I have learned more from my roommates, Tiffany and Amanda, about transgender girls in the last few days than I ever learned by watching television. My parents were big fans of the tabloid talk shows before they got sent to prison. For most of us, this is our first experience being classmates to transgender girls," I explained.

"I'm one who has had previous experience with being in the same room with a transgender girl. My name is Stephanie; my mother sent me here after I got expelled from school on the last day of sixth grade. One of my classmates, Cathy, was one of my classmates in my hometown of Quantico, Virginia. I knew her as a boy named Curtis. Eight months ago, he came out to his mother and sisters that he wanted to become a girl. I became sort of a mentor to her. As the days progress, you will have transgender classmates who will be among your best friends. Cathy and I share a dorm room with a troubled girl and another transgender student. We can learn a lot from each other during the time we're at this school," she added.

After support group ended, I met up with Ruth for dinner. We both had chicken dinners before returning to our dorm room to do our homework. "I had one girl in my support group who admitted that she had never met a transgender girl before. Her name is Mary Ellen; she was referred to our school after she got expelled from her school in Cape May, New Jersey a month before the end of last school year," Ruth told me.

"I also have one girl in my support group who's the same way. Like me, Mary Jane is a ward of the court. She's from North Carolina, and said that having

transgender classmates will take some getting used to," I added.

After we did our homework, we relaxed in front of the television set before turning in at the mandatory time of ten o'clock. I decided on my white night shirt for my first official night as a student at Rainbow. When I turned the light out, my first day at the school was in the books. I knew that I had found a school I could finally fit into.

Two: Caroline Rushing, Eighth Grade, Seattle Campus

September 9: This is my second year at the Rainbow School for Girls' campus in Seattle, which serves the Pacific Northwest. Among my classmates were girls from all or parts of Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington. For the first eleven years of my life, I was a boy named Carlton, living in Hermiston, Oregon. When I finished the sixth grade, just two days before my twelfth birthday, I told my family that I wanted to become a girl. I began living full-time as Caroline just a week later. My therapist referred me to this school.

It was six-thirty in the morning when my alarm clock went off. I share a dorm room with two troubled girls, Susan Greene from Kalispell, Montana, and Gayle Stanley from Brigham City, Utah, and another transgender girl, Darlene Chandler from nearby Everett. Darlene spent the first twelve years of her life as a boy named Darwin; she was also living full-time as a girl. Our dorm room has a view of Puget Sound.

Two things were happening on this particular Monday, apart from my classes. During my lunch hour, I was to stop by one of the Fashion Design classrooms to pick up my dress for the Kick-Off

Dance the following Saturday night. The other one was a consultation with the gender identity team working on my case after support group. This would be concerning a possible final recommendation for gender reassignment surgery. When I woke up, I was wearing my pink baby doll nightie. I went to my closet to select the uniform for the day: a baby blue plaid skirt, white blouse, matching bra, panties and lace-top socks, and a pair of medium blue flats. Darlene and I went to the cafeteria for breakfast; we both had orange-flavored yogurt and a pint of orange juice.

"When do you pick up your dress, Caroline?" she asked me.

"I pick it up during my lunch hour today," I replied.

"I'm picking up mine after support group today; Susan and Gayle picked theirs up on Friday," she added.

"What's also on your schedule?"

"Not much after support group."

"I have a meeting with the gender identity team after support group. I hope to get a final recommendation for gender reassignment surgery."

"When do you hope to have the operation?"

"I'm hoping to have the operation sometime in June of next year."

"I don't have a meeting with my gender identity team until next week. I'm hoping to have my operation next summer."

Darlene and I went to our classes after breakfast. Darlene's first hour class was Feminine Deportment, while my class was Algebra. I must admit, solving for "X" wasn't my strong suit prior to seventh grade. I've become very proficient at the subject since then, thanks to a lot of hard work. Darlene and I both had English for second hour; we were working on finding not only the subjects and verbs of sentences, but also indirect and direct objects in the same sentences. When we emerged from class, Gayle joined us. She was in her Life Science class in the room next door. "What's happening?" she asked us.

"We were learning indirect and direct objects in sentences in English class," Darlene replied.

"I was learning about life cycles of plants in Life Science," Gayle added.

"I'm learning solutions to complex problems in Algebra class," I then added.

"What are you learning in Feminine Deportment, Darlene?"

"Gayle, I'm learning how to walk in high heels. I've been wearing either pumps or flats since I began living full-time as a girl a year ago. I've pretty much mastered walking in three-inch heels; I'm now working on walking in four-inch heels."

I then asked Gayle: "What's up with Susan?"

"She isn't used to having transgender roommates yet. She was just placed here by the court in Montana because she assaulted three classmates at her old middle school in Kalispell. Either you or Darlene should have a talk with her," she replied.

"I'll have a talk with her after my meeting with the gender identity team," I added.

The three of us would be in a Social Studies class at third hour. The subject we were studying is problems associated with urban areas. Our teacher, Dee Chandler, is Darlene's aunt. On this particular day, we were studying the problems associated with predominantly African-American neighborhoods. Our lunch break immediately after our third hour class; Darlene and I decided to have lunch together. We both had ham sandwiches on rye bread with a side salad and a pint of milk. We found a table away from the other students.

"How is your family dealing with your transition, Caroline?" she asked me.

"They're taking their own time accepting me as a girl. My mother and my older sister, Cathi, already accept me as the girl I'm becoming. My father is starting to come around. My older brother, Eddie, has been the slowest to come around and accepting me as his kid sister. My youngest brother, Elwood, has been the quickest to accept me; he has a classmate whose big sister went through the same thing I'm going through," I replied.

"My parents have been totally supportive of me from the start, as well as my older sister, Danielle and the twin boys, George and Greg. If it hadn't been for Aunt Dee teaching at this school, and my Uncle Kevin being a psychologist, I probably wouldn't be living full-time as the girl I should have been to begin with," Darlene added.

"The best thing we can do is stay strong through our transitions," I assured her.

After lunch, I made a quick stop at one of the Fashion Design classrooms to pick up my dress for the Kick-Off Dance. It is a peach-colored satin dress with lace overlay and short, lace sleeves; I also picked up a pair of peach-colored satin pumps. From there, I went to my Feminine Deportment class, where I was learning how to walk in high heels. I hadn't quite mastered three-inch heels yet; when I master that height, I would be going on to four-inch heels. I had Astronomy at fifth hour; I was studying the composition of the stars with my class. After my Astronomy class, I went on to my Public Speaking class, where I was working on writing a speech. Physical Education was my seventh hour class; my class was studying basic dance.

I decided to talk about Susan at the support group after Physical Education class. I was in one of the Eighth Grade Transgender support groups. Dr. Bethany Howe, from the Guidance Department, was the facilitator, with Mr. Harris from the Math Department and Miss Roberts from the Fashion Department as co-facilitators. "How many of you have a roommate who's having a hard time coming to grips with having a transgender girl for a roommate?" I asked my group.

"Why do you ask?" Dr. Howe asked me.

"I have a roommate who's having a hard time getting used to living with transgender roommates. Her name is Susan. She came here from Kalispell, Montana last week, after she was caught assaulting three classmates at her middle school. She hasn't shared her living space with a girl other than her older sister, let alone a transgender girl," I replied.

"I know how you feel," added Becky Johnson, who was in the support group with me in seventh grade.

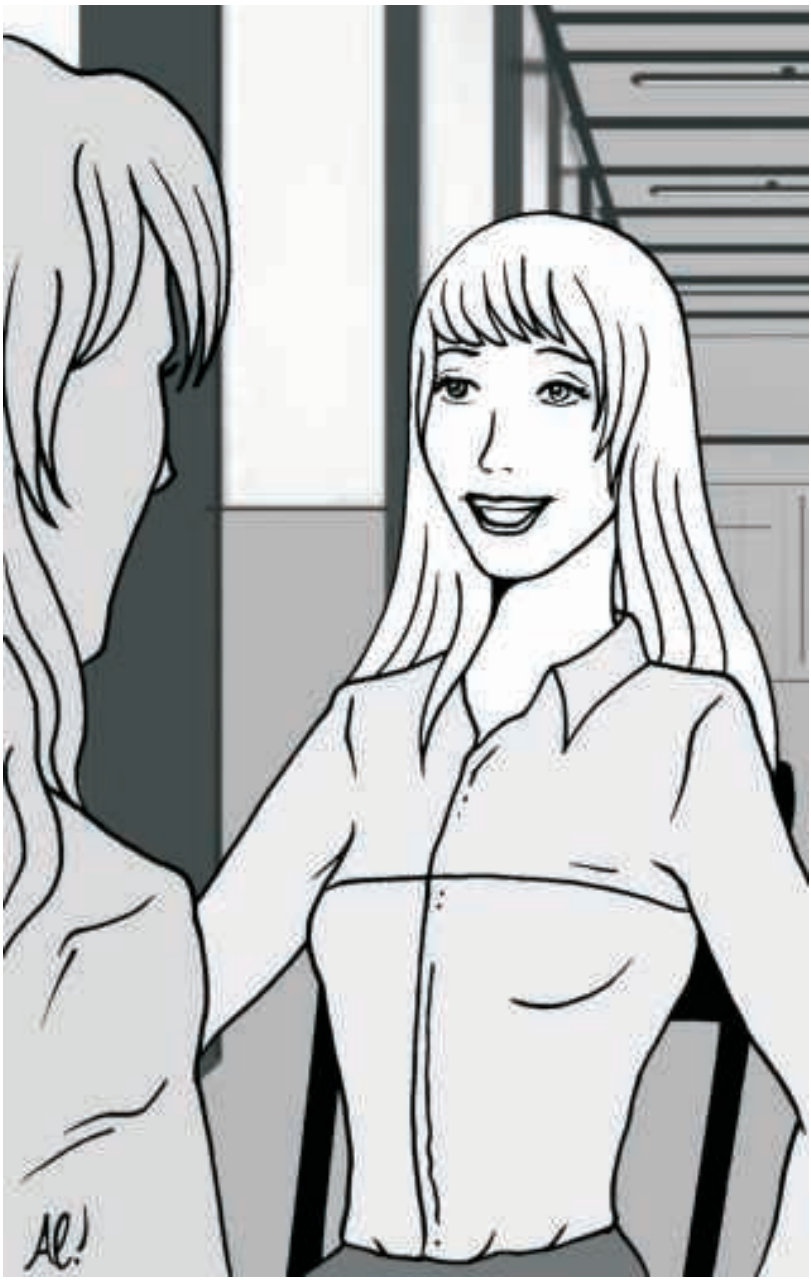
"What can you tell us?" Mr. Harris asked her.

"Stephanie is now one of my best friends. It got off to a rocky start, however. She was sent here by the court system in Nevada. Her parents couldn't take care of her after her mother got sent to prison for armed robbery and her father had to be put in a nursing home after suffering a massive stroke. Stephanie also got into trouble a lot at school. She used to beat up on the boys a lot. Shortly after her mom was sentenced and her dad had his stroke, her Uncle Dave asked the court to place her here at Rainbow. At first, she felt threatened by my mere presence; she had never heard of, let alone met, a transgender girl. She didn't know that one could change genders. One night, after we got done with our homework, we sat down in my bedroom at the dorm, and had a nice, long talk. I told her my situation, and she told me about hers. When I told her that we were the same despite of how we started life or how we got here, she cried her heart out. I shed a tear as I embraced her. Since then, we've done practically everything together on our off hours," she explained.

"I intend to have a nice talk with Susan tonight," I added.

After support group, I went to the Counseling Center. I went to Conference Room Number Three, where my gender identity team was awaiting my arrival. They consisted of my psychologist, Dr. Harriet Beam, along with Dr. Karen Conrad, my endocrinologist, Dr. Stephen Harding, my psychiatrist, and Dr. Naja Aziz, the medical director at the school. Dr. Aziz started the session.

"This meeting is to determine if Caroline Michelle Rushing is a suitable candidate for gender reassignment surgery. She is presently an eighth grade honor student at our school; she carried a perfect 4.0 grade



point average in seventh grade. Academically, she has excelled in her new role as a girl. When she was Carlton Michael Rushing, he was only an average student, carrying a 2.275 grade point average. As a girl, her grades have markedly improved. I think she would be a better student after she goes through the surgery that will complete her transformation from boy to girl," she explained.

"Naja, I've seen a marked improvement in her attitude since she began living full-time as Caroline. As Carlton, he was bullied mercilessly by his classmates. He refused to take part in the games other boys played. He clearly did not like the attitude his classmates showed toward him; by the sixth grade, he was showing a very negative attitude toward his teachers. When he told his family he wanted to become a girl, they were totally supportive. Her attitudes toward her teachers have been very positive, she's been able to make new friends among the girls here at Rainbow, and she's shown a true appreciation for life. She's also shown an interest in boys," added Harriet.

"I must agree that she has adjusted well to her new life as a girl. She loves life now. Harriet, it was an excellent decision to have her assigned to this school. The medicine she's taken has minimized the effects of her attention deficit disorder. She's more focused now than she's ever been before. I just can't see her going back to being a boy. She's a girl now, and she's enjoying life," Stephen then added.

Karen remarked: "The hormone levels she's been taking to allow her body to take on a more feminine shape have not given her any side effects. Just a year ago, she had a flat chest. Today, her breasts have grown to a size 34, fitting into an 'A' cup bra. Her hips and buttocks have become more pronounced. I think she can adjust very well should she have the opera-

tion. Caroline has come a long way in just over a year."

Harriet then asked me: "Caroline, do you feel that you are ready for the final step? Are you ready to complete your journey from boy to girl?"

"Yes, I am," I replied.

I stepped out of the room for a moment while my gender identity team continued to discuss my case. It was just enough time for me to get a drink of water. Around five-thirty, Dr. Aziz invited me back in.

"Caroline, I'm very happy with your progress in your transition from boy to girl. You have shown changes in your attitudes toward your teachers and your friends, you've adjusted well to your new social role as a girl, your grades have markedly improved, and we don't see any problems with you completing your transition. Dr. Aziz, Dr. Harding, Dr. Conrad and I agree that the next course of action should be that you undergo gender reassignment surgery. Therefore, we are recommending that you undergo gender reassignment surgery. We know good surgeons in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Philadelphia who will do an excellent job with your surgery. Your parents have already begun the process of setting up a date with the surgeon in San Francisco to perform your operation next summer," Harriet explained.

I left the conference room very happy, for I was looking forward to the completion of my transformation from the unhappy, insecure boy I was just over a year ago to the confident and happy girl I've become. I stopped at the cafeteria to pick up a fish sandwich and a bag of potato chips; I arrived back at my dorm room around six o'clock. Darlene was awaiting my arrival.

"How did it go, Caroline?" she asked me.

"I have been approved for my operation," I said with a tinge of excitement.

"That's great!" Darlene added.

"By the way, where's Susan?" I asked her.

"She's at the library, checking out several books on the transgender lifestyle," she replied.

Gayle came into the living room. "The other troubled girls were talking about having transgender classmates for the first time. It was something a member of Susan's group said that really got her motivated to go to the library to check out several books on the subject," she added.

"She's expecting that talk with you," Darlene added.

Susan walked through the front door of our dorm room fifteen minutes later. She's five-six, average build, plain looks, with blonde hair and wearing our standard uniform. She set her backpack down on the kitchen counter, and sat down on the forest green couch in the living room. I went over to the forest green swivel rocker, and sat down. "I understand you want to speak to me, Caroline," she said, switching her attention to me.

"Susan, it's time that we had a talk about transgender classmates. You're dealing with such classmates for the first time in your life. It isn't easy for a girl like you, who has lived as a female all her life, to share a classroom, let alone living quarters, with a girl like myself and Darlene, who haven't lived all our lives as the girls we feel we should be. Coming from a small town, you don't get to meet very many

transgender folk. Darlene, for example, is from Everett, not far from here. Seattle has a sizable population of people like us, who are transgender. I come from Hermiston, where there aren't very many transgender people. The nearest support group to my hometown was in Portland, so my therapist sent me here. Darlene and I began our lives as boys; yet, our mindsets told us that we were really girls. We felt so trapped in our male bodies. We are lucky we have supportive families who help us in any way we can with our transitions to girls," I explained.

"What makes you the way you are?" Susan asked me.

"From an early age, we realize that our minds and bodies aren't in sync. Our bodies may indicate that we are male, but our minds say that we're female. I, for one, knew I should have been a girl from the time I was two and a half years old. We begin dressing as girls from an early age; I began wearing my sister's old dresses when I was three years old. Cathi thought I made a convincing little girl when I put on her old pageant dress. I felt more comfortable dressing as a girl than I did dressing as a boy. I didn't know about being transgender until I was diagnosed with gender identity disorder after I finished the sixth grade."

"So, what does one have to do to transition from a boy to a girl?"

"First of all, we have to be officially diagnosed by a professional with gender identity disorder. There have been so many different terms for this: gender dysphoria, transsexualism, sexual identity disorder, I can go on for hours. Darlene is in a similar situation. It's where a person who has a male body shows an overwhelming desire to become female. We're now receiving hormone replacement therapy; this allows us to develop more feminine features on our bodies."

"In other words, you're growing breasts, and your hips and butt are more pronounced."

"Darlene and I have been living full-time as girls since we started here a little over a year ago. I've just been approved for my operation."

"What operation is that?"

"It is called Gender Reassignment Surgery or GRS for short. It's been called Sex Reassignment Surgery or SRS, Sex Change Surgery and a Sex-Change Operation. This is where the male genitals are removed, and female genitalia constructed. This is the final step to get our bodies synchronized with our minds."

"How old do you have to be to have that kind of operation?"

"You have to be at least twelve years old to have this operation. In order to be a candidate, you have to live full-time as a girl for at least a year; that way, the medical professionals can determine if you can successfully adjust to living in the role of a girl. If they have no doubt that you are able to adjust to living as a girl, then they will approve you for the operation. Today, more and more of our young transgender population are opting to transition while even in grade school, while twenty years ago, many waited until they at least graduated from high school to begin the transition from male to female. Many years ago, you had to be twenty-one years old to have the operation performed on you. That minimum age was eventually lowered to eighteen, although some girls have had this done as early as fourteen years of age. While the vast majority of people who go through this are boys who transition to girls, there are more people transitioning from girls to boys in this day and age."

"When will Darlene have her operation?"

"She has yet to be approved for hers. The team working on her case doesn't meet to make the recommendation for another two weeks."

"So, what you're saying is that even though you were born a boy, you strongly identified as a girl."

"That is correct, Susan. Darlene has strongly identified as a girl from the time she was four years old. Before I came here, I was a shy, insecure boy named Carlton. My mother would have named me Caroline had I been born a girl. Darlene was a very unhappy boy named Darwin before she came here to study and transition."

"Do you like boys or girls, as far as your attractions are concerned?"

"Darlene and I both like boys. We dream of being on the arms of some of the cutest guys in town. In fact, we get our chance Saturday night, when we go to the Kick-Off Dance. We both dream of being beautiful brides when we grow up."

"I'm glad I got these books on the transgender lifestyle and the transgender community. It will help me better understand girls like you and Darlene."

"As soon as you get your homework done, I recommend you start reading these books right away, Susan."

"I intend to, Caroline."

Gayle came into the living room from her bedroom just as Susan and I were finishing our conversation. She was holding a royal blue tea-length dress in her right hand. "Susan, you were in such a hurry this afternoon, that you forgot to stop by the Fashion De-

sign department to pick up your dress for the dance Saturday night," she informed her.

"I knew I forgot something, but I didn't know what it was," added Susan, somewhat embarrassed.

"Did you get your dress, Caroline?" Gayle asked me.

"I got mine during the lunch hour; I just hung it up in my closet. Darlene got hers yesterday after support group," I replied.

Around seven-thirty, after we finished our homework, we sat down to dinner. Gayle had a fried chicken dinner, complete with mashed potatoes and gravy, garden salad with Italian dressing and dinner rolls, delivered to our dorm from a nearby restaurant. Darlene made iced green tea. We were still in our uniforms when we sat down at the kitchen table.

"There was one thing I forgot to ask you and Darlene," Susan asked us.

"What would you like to ask?" Darlene asked her.

"How many transgender students attend this campus?" Susan then asked.

"There are 480 girls enrolled at this school. Of that number, 250 are transgender, representing fifty-two percent of the student population. Girls who are troubled for various reasons, like you and Gayle, represent forty-eight percent of the student population. This school runs ten campuses around the country; the average ratio of transgender girls to troubled girls on our campuses is about fifty-fifty. The highest percentage of transgender students are at our two campuses in California. The Los Angeles campus, with 600 students, has 360 transgender students, repre-

senting sixty percent of the total student population. The San Francisco campus, with 650 students, has 410 transgender students, or sixty-three percent of the student population. Most of the transgender students are referred to by a therapist; only a small number are referred to by the courts. The highest percentage of troubled girls is at our Tampa Bay campus; of a student population of 470, 285 of those are troubled, or sixty-one percent of the population. Most of these girls are referred to by the courts, like you and Gayle, although some are referred to by a therapist," I explained.

"When do transgender students most often have their operations?" Gayle then asked.

"Most often, transgender girls usually have gender reassignment surgery either after finishing the eighth grade or their sophomore year of high school. A good number of them have their operations after finishing their freshman or junior years of high school. A fair number wait until after graduation before having gender reassignment surgery. A few even have had their operations when they finish seventh grade. No transgender girl has entered any of our campuses having had the operation; we encourage students like myself and Caroline to start living full-time as girls when we start the seventh grade," Darlene replied.

After dinner, Susan and I loaded the dishwasher in our dorm before joining our roommates to watch a historical documentary on television. It was just before nine o'clock that I went to the bedroom I shared with Darlene. I selected my mauve night dress; I went into the bathroom to take a shower. As soon as I was done, I put on my night dress and got into my bed. Darlene took her shower after I got out; she was in a black baby doll nightie. Before we climbed into our

beds, I showed Darlene my dress for the Saturday dance.

"It is so beautiful!" she exclaimed, in awe at the beauty of my dress.

"Your dress is so beautiful, too! We'll give the boys a dance they won't forget," I added.

"It'll be Susan's first time at a dance; I hope she won't be as awkward as we were when we attended the Kick-Off Dance last year."

"I'm glad I had that talk with her today. She'll be meeting a lot more girls like us when we go to the dance. I'm sure she'll be ready."

"Since we're so much prettier now, Caroline, I'm sure we'll get noticed by the guys."

"I hear a few cute guys pursued you at last year's dance, Darlene."

We got into our beds around nine-thirty. We continued our girl talk until the ten o'clock curfew for the middle school students.

"Good night, Caroline," Darlene said before she turned her lamp out.

"Good night, Darlene," I said before turning my light out to go to sleep. A long Monday was finally at an end.

Three: Melissa Lee Hatcher, Freshman Class, Tampa Bay Campus

October 12: Just four months earlier, I was on the operating table at a Philadelphia hospital, having my gender reassignment surgery. For the first eleven years of my life, I was known as Michael Lane Hatcher of Sarasota, Florida. I finished sixth grade just one day before I turned twelve years old, and told my parents and sisters I wanted to become a girl. On that same day, my parents allowed me to start living full-time as Melissa.

I live in a dormitory with one troubled girl, Kara Sheehan of Pensacola, Florida, and two transgender girls, an African-American girl named Natasha Cunningham of Tuskegee, Alabama and a Hispanic girl named Julia Hernandez from Miami's Little Havana section. Natasha had her operation in San Francisco three days after I had mine; Julia, who shared a bedroom with me in our dorm room, had yet to have her operation. Just a year ago, Kara was in juvenile detention in Escambia County, serving time for shoplifting. Her mother, a parole officer for the State of Florida, didn't have the time or resources to watch over her. She had enough on her plate with two other daughters and her son, all of whom were honor students. Her father died of a massive stroke when she was ten years old; he had been homeless since her mother divorced him when he was seven. Natasha began life as Nathaniel, while Julia began her life as Jose. When she began her transition, she dropped her father's surname of Rodriguez and adopted her mother's maiden last name. Natasha's parents taught at the Tuskegee Institute, while Julia's parents arrived from Cuba as children during the final months of the Batista regime.

It was a Saturday morning. We were able to sleep late, since we had finished our homework the night before. That night was the Homecoming Dance. I was on the Homecoming Court; there are eight students on the Court. I was the transgender member of the Court from the freshman class; the other one was Valerie Davis, a troubled girl who, just a year ago, was serving time in juvenile detention in Volusia County on a weapons charge. Each class selected a transgender student and a troubled girl for the Court. The last three years, a troubled girl had been selected Homecoming Queen. Our escorts would be a group of male honor students from around Saint Petersburg and Clearwater. It was nine o'clock in the morning when I woke up. I was in a canary yellow night dress. The first thing I did was look in the mirror. Even after a good night's sleep, I looked as beautiful as I did the night before. When I opened the front door to the dorm room, I found the morning paper and two dozen donuts on a small shelf next to the door. I brought them in, and set them on the table. I got a gallon of milk out of the refrigerator, and poured myself a glass. While I was having a leisurely breakfast, Julia came into the kitchen. She was in a canary yellow baby doll nightie and a matching negligee.

"Good morning, Melissa," she said to me.

"Good morning, Julia," I said with a smile before asking her if she had a good night's sleep.

"I had a good night's sleep, although I wonder about Kara," Julia replied.

"Has something been bothering her at night?"

"This situation is very new to her. She has been around the roughest of the rough, as far as the people she's associated with are concerned. She's never been in a situation where a good number of her class-

mates are transgender, like us. She's afraid of what the other people in her old neighborhood would think if she had gone to school with transgender girls. Natasha has been trying to reach out to her."

"I heard from her counselor and the other girls that she's a tomboy who needs to be schooled in the finer points of being feminine. Beating up others, especially those of the opposite gender, is not considered feminine behavior. She should be looking at guys as potential dating or marriage partners, not punching bags. I know she's been through a tough life, but she really needs our help. Natasha's mother teaches child psychology at Tuskegee Institute; she's been trying some things her mother taught her on Kara."

Suddenly, Natasha came out of her room, wearing a red nightshirt. "It's Kara. Come quick!" she yelled softly with utter concern. Julia and I ran as fast as we could into the bedroom. We found her on the bed, unconscious. She was still in her white blouse, red pleated skirt and a pair of white ankle-high socks that's our school uniform. Her white sneakers were at the side of her bed. Since I was trained in first aid, I touched her right wrist, and checked her pulse. "She's got a pulse," I told them.

"I'll call an ambulance," Julia said before she grabbed the cordless phone in the kitchen.

"When did this happen?" I asked Natasha.

"It must have happened while I was sleeping. She was totally exhausted from doing her homework last night. She brought in a ton of it when she walked in the door last night. When she finished, she went straight to bed. She didn't even bother taking off her uniform," she replied.

When Julia returned to Natasha and Kara's bedroom, she was on the phone to the medical director, Dr. Fawn Nader. "She was unconscious when Natasha found her," she said to her. I touched her right wrist again. I also counted the number of beats while looking at my watch. "Pulse is sixty," I informed them.

As soon as Julia got off the phone, I asked Natasha to stand at the front door to guide the emergency medical technicians in. Two young women in blue jumpsuits arrived three minutes later, carrying a portable electrocardiogram machine, a defibrillator and a box carrying medicine and a blood pressure cuff, all of which were on a gurney. One was a blonde, the other a redhead. Natasha showed them in; they followed her to the bedroom where we were gathered.

"How long has she been like this?" the blonde EMT asked.

"She's been like this since about one o'clock this morning. She had a ton of homework to do after she came back from support group. When she finished her homework, she took off her shoes and collapsed in her bed. I discovered her unconscious when I woke up about fifteen minutes ago," Natasha replied.

Just a minute later, a campus security officer arrived. Julia came out of the bedroom to talk to the officer, while Natasha and I were dealing with the paramedics. The redhead asked us: "How old is she?"

"She's fourteen years old," I replied.

While the paramedics worked on Kara, we got the gurney ready. After we finished, I asked: "Who's going to the hospital with her?"

"I will; I found her, so I'll accompany her to the hospital," Natasha replied.

Julia came in just as we were helping the paramedics get Kara onto the gurney for the trip to a nearby hospital. "Is there anything important we should know?" the redhead asked.

"She does have a history of physical abuse at the hands of her father," Natasha replied.

"Is her father still living?" the blonde EMT asked.

"Her father has been dead for four years," I replied.

As soon as Kara was taken to the hospital, Julia and I cleaned up the mess the paramedics left behind. "I hope it isn't serious," she said.

"I pray and hope so, too," I added.

When I returned to my bedroom, I laid out my blue sequin dress, matching panties, garter belt, light brown stockings and blue satin pumps on the bed before taking a shower to prepare for the crowning of this year's Homecoming Queen. It would be at halftime of the soccer game between our school and a private high school from Dunedin. The guys who would be escorting the girls on the Homecoming Court would be from the Clearwater community, attending various public high schools. The soccer game would kick off at noon.

At halftime, our soccer team, the Rainbow Tampa Bay Mermaids, was leading one-nil. The Homecoming Court would be introduced as soon as the teams cleared the field, starting with the two freshmen. The public address announcer was Mr. Burden, one of the teachers in the English Department. "Ladies and gentlemen, let's introduce the members of this year's

Homecoming Court. Our first member is freshman Heather Sanford from Valdosta, Georgia. She is in her second year at Rainbow; she has been assigned here by the juvenile court in Lowndes County. Just two years ago, as a seventh grader, her grade point average was a meager 0.9; today, she has raised her GPA to 3.8. She is escorted by Keith Milton; he's from nearby Largo, and an honor student as a freshman," he announced.

After she took her place with her escort, the next name was called. "Second is the other freshman, Melissa Hatcher. She is in her third year at Rainbow; she has been an honor student in every semester. A native of Sarasota, she is being escorted by Eric Weber, who's a sophomore at a high school in her hometown. They've known each other since they were in the first grade." We took our places next to Heather and Keith. The first sophomore introduced was Grace Mayhew, an ex-juvenile delinquent from Daytona Beach; she spent some time in detention for shoplifting before the court sent her to our school. She was escorted by Greg Miller, a sophomore and a star pitcher for the local high school baseball team. The second one was Brenda Temple, originally from Orlando. She began her transition in seventh grade, and had her gender surgically reassigned in Philadelphia the year before I had mine. She was escorted by Johnny Eller, a senior from the local high school basketball team.

The first junior introduced to the fans was Laura Williams from Jacksonville. She was removed from an abusive family situation by the courts; her father physically abused her before he was sent to prison for manufacturing and distribution of methamphetamines and running a meth lab. Since she came to our school in the eighth grade, she has maintained a 4.0 grade point average, and was already getting scholarship offers from colleges and

universities all over North America. She was escorted by Victor Stephens, a junior who is an honor student at a high school in Largo. The second junior, Stephanie Richards, came to our school in seventh grade; she underwent gender reassignment surgery in San Francisco two years ago. She's been an honor student every semester she's attended Rainbow Tampa Bay. Her escort, Brian Johnson, is a senior who has been an honor student since kindergarten; he's gotten scholarship offers from numerous colleges and universities, including an offer from Oxford.

The first senior on the Homecoming Court introduced was Jennifer O'Hanlon, a native of Fort Walton Beach. She came to our school as a freshman after serving a year in juvenile detention in Okaloosa County for assaulting a thirteen-year-old boy at her former middle school. Since she came to our school, her grade point average has gone up from a 1.7 to a 3.7; she had already applied to the University of Washington in Seattle. She was escorted by Kevin Porter, a senior honor student who has been flooded with scholarship offers. The second senior, Fawn Denton, took me under her wing when I first came to Rainbow Tampa Bay two years ago. Having been through gender reassignment when she finished eighth grade, she showed me the finer points of being a girl. She was escorted by her boyfriend, Eric Allen, a freshman at the University of Illinois' Chicago campus. Fawn originally came from Chicago; her family relocated to Bradenton five years ago, when her father's employer transferred him from Hoffman Estates.

Once the entire court was announced, Mr. Burden introduced the previous year's Homecoming Queen. "It's been a year since Darla Davis was crowned our Homecoming Queen. In the year since she's been crowned, she continued to maintain a perfect 4.0 grade point average, which earned her a college

scholarship. She's now a freshman at the University of Southern California, where she's pursuing a degree in psychology. She's come a long way from when she came here as a high school freshman, when the Family Court in Miami-Dade County stripped her parents, both drug addicts, of custody of her. She's escorted by Oliver Francis, who escorted her last year when she was crowned. Mr. Francis is also a freshman at USC, pursuing an accounting degree. In this recording, Darla reflects on her year as Homecoming Queen," he told the crowd over the public address system.

Darla's pre-recorded voice came on the public address system. "It was a complete surprise for me when I was told I was Homecoming Queen. It has been a wonderful experience for me in the year I've been Homecoming Queen. I've been able to get the negative experiences I've been through out of my mind as much as possible, and be an ambassador for our school. Without the Rainbow School for Girls, I would not be the person I am now. I probably would have been in jail or on the street. All of my teachers and friends have been a godsend; I would not trade this experience for anything. I hope to one day be a counselor or social worker at any of the Rainbow campuses. For all of this, you have my eternal gratitude."

The fans fell silent as Darla approached the two seniors on the Court. She paused for a moment before putting the tiara on Fawn's head. "Congratulations, Fawn," she told her as she fastened the tiara on her head. This would be a first at our school; a transsexual girl had been selected as Homecoming Queen.

"Ladies and gentlemen, Fawn Denton is this year's Homecoming Queen," Mr. Burden announced on the public address system. I was especially proud of her,

since she helped me through my transition from boy to girl.

The game ended with Rainbow winning two-to-one in regulation time. After I left the small soccer stadium on campus around three-thirty, I went back to my dorm room to relax before I had to get my gown on at six o'clock. The Homecoming dance would begin at approximately eight o'clock at the gymnasium. Julia was awaiting my arrival; she was in a pink T-shirt and a stonewashed denim skirt. "Who's this year's Homecoming Queen?" she asked me.

"Fawn Denton is this year's Homecoming Queen. She helped me through my transition from boy to girl," I replied.

"She really deserves this award," Julia asked me before I asked her about Natasha.

"Natasha is still at the hospital with Kara. I talked to her a half hour ago; the doctors diagnosed her with severe exhaustion. She'll be in the hospital for at least a week," she replied.

"She looked very exhausted when I got back last night."

I took off my dress, and lay down on my bed in just my lingerie. I had already hung my gown on the door of my closet. When I woke up, it was shortly after five o'clock. I opened the top drawer of my dresser, and got out a pink pair of bikini panties, a matching strapless bra, garter belt, white stockings and pink satin high heels. I set my sleeveless Homecoming dress, made by the Fashion Design students, on the bed, along with my garter belt, stockings and high heels. I went into the bathroom to take a shower; after I got out, I dried myself off before putting on the bra and panties. I would make myself up to look very

glamorous before I put on my garter belt, stockings and high heels. Julia had just gotten into her blue strapless Homecoming dress; I helped her zip up the back of her dress, while she reciprocated with zipping up the back of mine.

"Who's your date to the Homecoming Dance?" I asked her.

"His name is Glenn Sanchez. He's a friend of our family's from Miami. My sister Juanita set me up with him," she replied.

"Eric Weber is my date. He escorted me to the ceremony at halftime of today's soccer game. He's from my hometown of Sarasota; we've been friends since first grade," I added.

"What time will your date be here?" she asked me.

"He'll be here at six o'clock," I replied.

Just before our dates arrived, Natasha arrived back at our dorm room. She was exhausted from being at Kara's side all day. "Hey, don't you two look pretty!" she exclaimed, in awe at our beauty.

"Thank you, Natasha," I said with a smile.

"You look beat," Julia added.

"I am beat. I've had a long day at the hospital," Natasha told us, her voice showing her exhaustion.

"How's Kara?" I asked her.

"She's resting comfortably. All that homework she's had lately really got to her. She's never had this much homework in so short a time before," Natasha replied.

"Did they say anything about any kind of deficiency?" Julia asked.

"They did some tests this afternoon; they'll know more in the coming days," Natasha said before telling us, "I'm going straight to bed."

Just as Natasha shut the door to her bedroom, a knock was heard on the front door. It was Eric, holding a corsage. "This is for you," he told me before he handed me the corsage, which features a red rose and pink carnations. I immediately opened the see-through container, and put it on. "It's so beautiful. Thank you," I said to him before we embraced.

Glenn arrived fifteen minutes later with a corsage for Julia. Both of our dates were five-ten with average builds and short hair. Eric's hair was light brown, a compliment for my medium brown hair. Glenn's was black, matching Julia's hair exactly. Eric was wearing a navy blue suit and navy blue pinstripe tie; Glenn was in a gray tuxedo with a matching bow tie. We left our dorm room around six-fifteen, headed to the gymnasium across the campus.

At the door, we presented our tickets to the dance. I showed Julia and Glenn to a table near the dance floor, while Eric and I headed for a hallway behind the gym, where the rest of the Homecoming Court was waiting for us. Brenda Temple approached us when we arrived. She was five-seven with a slender build and long blonde hair done in a bun; she was in a baby blue Homecoming dress, beige stockings and baby blue high heels. "What took you so long, Melissa?" she asked me.

"We had a bit of a hairy situation today. One of my roommates is in the hospital," I replied.

"Have we heard about this?" she then asked.

"I don't know if you have or not, Brenda. Kara Sheehan was found unconscious in the bedroom she shares with Natasha Cunningham this morning. She's been diagnosed with severe exhaustion; she's resting comfortably at a nearby hospital. They ran some tests; we should know more in a few days," Eric replied.

One of the patrons of the school owned a DJ service; he was all set up before six o'clock. He was testing his equipment while we were awaiting the cue to enter the gymnasium. Eric and I would be the second couple to walk out onto the dance floor. At five minutes before seven o'clock in the evening, we lined up in the order in which we were to enter. The last one to enter was Fawn, in her lavender evening gown, escorted by Eric Allen. Darla, in the same red evening gown she wore when she was crowned Homecoming Queen last year, walked from another door toward the gazebo where Fawn was sitting down. Fawn, at five-eleven, towers over Darla at five-six. Both have blonde hair; Darla's is short with a bob, while Fawn's long hair was done in a bun. Fawn remained sitting down in the center of the gazebo while Darla put the crown on her head. Eric Allen, six-three with an athletic build and wearing a navy blue tuxedo, asked Fawn for the first dance. He took her hand as he gently guided her to the dance floor. The DJ selected a romantic standard, "Love is Blue", for their first dance.

After the first dance was done, my date asked me for a dance. "I would be honored, Eric," I replied. He gently took me by the hand, and guided me to the dance floor, where we slowly danced to "I Remember You."

Around eight-thirty, we took a break to have something to eat. Eric got me a hot dog and a bag of potato chips, while he ordered a double hamburger and a

bag of barbecue potato chips. We also ordered a pitcher of lemonade. We sat down at a table near the dance floor. We watched Julia and Glenn dance the fast dances.

It was shortly after ten o'clock that the dance was beginning to wind down. Julia and Glenn had left shortly after nine o'clock; Glenn had to be on the eleven-thirty flight back to Miami. They parted with a kiss when he got into the limousine for the ride across the Courtney Campbell Causeway to Tampa International Airport. Around ten-fifteen, Eric Weber and I walked to his room in the Visitors' Quarters, where a steak dinner was waiting for us. Eric picked up the note, and read it. "What does it say?" I asked him.

"I hope you and Melissa are having a good time. I thought you would be hungry, so we sent you this steak dinner with our compliments. Love, Mom and Dad," he read from the note.

"That was thoughtful of them," I lovingly told him.

Eric lit the candles on the table before he pulled out my chair so I could sit down. When he sat down, he took my hand, and complimented: "Melissa, I am very thrilled and amazed at how beautiful of a girl you've become. When I couldn't get a date to my high school's Homecoming Dance last week, my parents contacted your mom and dad and arranged everything. Both of our parents know how much of a romantic I am; I hope you're just as romantic."

"Eric, I'm very happy to hear those words coming from you. I'm sorry you couldn't get a date for last week's dance; I'm very happy you made the trip here to be my escort and date. I am a very romantic girl; I find you very handsome," I said, looking at him through the candle light.

"It never mattered to me whether the girl I'm in love with was born male or female. The only thing that matters is the girl I'm looking at now. I really mean it, you're the most beautiful girl in the world to me," he told me, looking at me through the candle light.

It was around twelve-thirty in the morning when we made our way back to the dormitory. We were standing at the door; we were gently holding hands. "Melissa, I've had a wonderful evening. This has been the most special night of my life; I'm very happy I spent this with such a beautiful girl. I've never had such strong feelings for a girl before," he whispered nervously.

"Eric, I'm very happy I spent this evening with you, too. I never thought I would have such strong feelings for a guy until you came to the campus to escort me and be my date for the Homecoming Dance. I don't know how to say this, but I'm in love with you," I lovingly said in a whispering manner.

"Melissa, I'm in love with you, too," he said before we entered into a gentle embrace. We looked at each other for a moment before closing our eyes and kissing each other. After our first kiss, we looked at each other before we engaged in a deep, tender kiss. I could feel him caressing my back, while I was doing the same to his. We were both tempted to make love to each other, but we resisted the temptation. We parted with another deep kiss before I went back into the dormitory around quarter to one in the morning.

I had a warm, glowing feeling as I walked in the front door to the dormitory. Julia was still in her dress; Natasha was fast asleep. "How did it go with Eric?" she asked me.

"It went very well. We had a surprise waiting when we got to his room in the Visitors' Quarters; his par-

ents had a steak dinner delivered to us. I knew that I had fallen in love with him. We shared several kisses; we were both tempted to make love to each other, but we thought better of it," I replied.

"I got a text from Glenn; he made it safely back to Miami. His flight landed five minutes ago," Julia added.

We went back to our room to get out of our dresses, and change into something more comfortable. I put on my black baby doll nightie, while Julia changed into a mauve nightgown. We fell asleep in our beds around one-thirty in the morning; we rested the next day before returning to class the following Monday.

Before we went to support group on Monday, we found out about Kara's medical tests. She had a serious iron deficiency, and was prescribed an iron supplement. She would remain hospitalized for another week; she missed five days' class time. It was certainly a crazy weekend on the west coast of Florida.

Four: Carolee Jenkins, Sophomore Class, Casper Campus

December 7: This school practically saved my life. Just three years ago, I was in Juvenile Detention in Dodge City, Kansas for stealing $500 from my estranged father. I would have been in detention until I was twenty-one; but the judge in my case gave me an alternative: enroll at The Rainbow School for Girls. The campus that serves my area is located in Casper, Wyoming. Before I came to Rainbow, I was headed down a pathway to a life that was pretty messed up.

My mother was serving time in federal prison for her part in a plot to kill our Congressman because he spoke out against drugs and prostitution, of which

she was heavily into. My uncle Eric, who's a bachelor, just couldn't raise me. He had been through a bitter breakup before I was born, and had not been able to find a woman who would see past the turmoil of his past, and accept him as the nice guy he really is. He had become a successful nightclub owner, and was making his home outside of Brussels, Illinois.

It was just three and a half weeks before Christmas, and I was looking forward to spending it with Eric and Amanda Bronson. Their son, Eric, was two years old; Amanda was pregnant with their second child. The past couple of years, I had spent it with a host family, the Hamilton family. Over the summer, Mr. Hamilton's employer transferred him to San Francisco; he took his transsexual wife and their two children with them. I have Mr. Bronson for my Twentieth Century American History class; I had Mrs. Bronson last spring for my World History class.

It was very cold outside at seven o'clock on this particular morning that I stepped out of my dorm room with my best friend, Betty Smith, and headed to the cafeteria for breakfast. She and I are of the same height; we're both five-seven. She has a slender build, I have an average build. She has brunette hair, I'm a blonde. Betty and I met in seventh grade; she spent the first twelve years of her life as a boy named Elbert, or just Bert for short. When we met, she had just begun living full-time as a girl; she came to the school from Aurora, Colorado. After she finished eighth grade, she went to Philadelphia for her gender reassignment surgery. Since then, we've dated some of Casper's most handsome teenage boys. While I was still dating around, Betty had found a boyfriend in Keith Thomas, a junior at one of the local high schools.

"Have you thought about your plans for Christmas?" I asked her.

"No, I haven't, Carol. The last few years, I've spent it with my family, who gave me their unconditional support as I transitioned from boy to girl. This year, they're planning to go to Europe for the holidays," she replied.

"And you're not going?"

"They can't afford a ticket for me this year."

"I'm sure Mr. and Mrs. Bronson will have room at their place. They've been taking in select students, even though they have a son and are expecting their second child."

"I'm thinking of staying with my boyfriend. His parents not only approve of our relationship, they wouldn't mind having me for Christmas this year."

After breakfast, Betty went to her Fashion Design class, while I went to my English Literature class. My group would be giving our presentation on the book we selected for our project, "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." I caught up with my two other roommates, Cheryl Donald and Laura Forrest, after my first hour class. Like me, Cheryl spent some time in juvenile detention; she was in detention in Kansas for stealing a horse in Cheyenne County. She's five-six with a larger than average build with short dark brown hair. Laura, who is Casper born and raised, was transitioning from boy to girl; she is scheduled for her gender reassignment surgery in San Francisco the day after the end of the autumn academic session in ten days. For the first fourteen years of her life, she was known as Jerry. She's five-nine with a slender build and long brunette hair. All of us were in the standard winter uniform of a white blouse, green plaid skirts and gray sweat pants. "What are you doing in your English Literature class?" Cheryl asked me.

"My group made our presentation on 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' this morning. I got an 'A' on my part of the presentation," I replied.

"I was working on walking in high heels in Feminine Deportment class," Laura added.

"We were preparing for our final exam in Wyoming History," added Cheryl.

"I remember when I took Feminine Deportment after I came to this place. I didn't even know how to put on makeup or walk in pumps, let alone high heels. I hadn't even worn a dress since I was four years ago. I'm glad I came here; they've broken me of being a tomboy," I then added.

"I've mastered walking in high heels. It looks like I'm going to have my operation later this month," Laura told me.

Betty caught up with us just before we entered the Science and Math building. She was holding a green velvet dress she made for Christmas. "That dress is so beautiful!" Cheryl complimented.

"I just finished it last week; I got an 'A' on it," Betty added.

Betty had an Elementary Calculus class in the building at second hour; I had Intermediate Algebra, while Laura had Earth Science and Cheryl had Astronomy in the same building. Just a few short years ago, I couldn't even solve for "x". Now, I've pretty much mastered Algebra, and was ready for Introductory Calculus. We stayed in the same building for third hour; I would have Meteorology, while Betty had Chemistry, Cheryl had Introductory Calculus and Laura had Trigonometry. The four of us went to separate buildings for fourth hour; I went to the So-

cial Science building for my Twentieth Century American History class with Mr. Bronson. Betty would go to the Fine Arts building for her Spanish class with Mr. Leeds, while Laura followed me into the Social Science building for Wyoming History with Mrs. Bronson, and Cheryl went to the gymnasium for her Aerobics class. When we met for lunch after class, we were discussing our plans for the weekend; the last one before final exams.

"I'm going to relax Friday and Saturday night; I plan to start studying for my finals on Sunday," I told them.

"I'm with Carol on this one," Betty added.

"My brother Chuck is visiting me from St. Louis this weekend; he's attending Webster University. He's bringing his girlfriend with him; we're going out for pizza Friday night and to a country bar Saturday night. I'll be studying on Sunday," Cheryl informed us.

"I'm meeting with my therapist after support group on Friday; it'll be the last one before I have my operation. She is interested to know what grade I'm going to get in Feminine Deportment. The way things look now, I'm sure I'm going to get an 'A'. I'm going with a group of other girls to Eastridge Mall to buy new clothes Friday night; we're also headed for the National Historic Trails Center on Saturday afternoon. I'll be studying Saturday night and all day Sunday," added Laura.

"How are you and Betty going to relax?" Cheryl asked us.

"We're going to be watching movies Friday and Saturday night. After all that work we put in, we really need to unwind," Betty replied.

Fifth hour had us spread across the campus; I was in an aerobics class at the gymnasium, while Betty went to Mrs. Bronson's Wyoming History class, Cheryl was in Mr. Leeds' French class, and Laura was in Fashion Marketing class. The next hour, Betty went to her aerobics class with Cheryl, while Laura and I were in Introduction to Psychology. Seventh hour had Betty in Introduction to Psychology, while Cheryl was in English Literature, Laura in Fashion Design and I was in Introduction to Philosophy. We weren't scheduled to be back in our dorm room until after six-thirty that night.

After my classes were done, I went to my support group. I was in one of the three groups for ninth grade troubled girls. The group was facilitated by Dr. Steve Kane, one of the psychologists on the counseling staff, along with Mrs. Bronson and Fawn Allen, a first-year teacher in the Physical Education department. One of the girls in my group was an African-American girl named Dee Dee; she was five-nine with a slender build and her hair done in an Afro. She had been sent to the school in the eighth grade after she witnessed a grisly murder in Denver. It was one of her calmer days; she had been suffering from post traumatic stress disorder. She had a question for our group. "I know that half of this student body is transgender. My oldest brother, DeJuan, has started dating a transgender woman. What I would like to know is what kind of man would want to date such a woman?"

"This is a question that has so many answers. I'm sure the other facilitators or the girls in our group have various answers," Dr. Kane replied.

"How old is your brother?" asked Mrs. Bronson.

"He's now twenty-four years old," Dee Dee replied.

"How old is his girlfriend?" Miss Allen then asked.

"She's twenty-seven," she replied.

"Has she had the operation yet?" I asked her.

"She had the operation last summer in San Francisco," she told us.

Another one of the girls in the group was a willowy brunette named Frances. She came to our school in the seventh grade, after getting expelled from a middle school in Cheyenne. She's five-five with a slender build. "Where does DeJuan live?" she asked her.

"Fran, he lives in Los Angeles with three college friends," Dee Dee informed us.

Lily, an Asian girl, five foot six with her black hair done in a bob, was another girl in our support group. She was sent to our school at the beginning of the semester after getting thrown out of a high school in Kansas City, Kansas for getting in a fight with two boys and three girls. Trained in the martial arts by her older brother, a Black Belt in Karate, she had also suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, brought on by seeing her older sister raped when she was eleven years old. "Does he have a history of being rejected by the other girls?" she asked.

"Lily, he has been turned down by nearly every girl he's asked out on a date since he was a freshman in high school. I couldn't understand why such a good-looking, very fit and attractive guy like DeJuan would be rejected by every girl in his peer group. It doesn't matter if the girl he's asked out is black, white, Asian or whatever. My first thought is that the neighborhood we lived in was a bad neighborhood; it seems that a murder, rape, burglary, car theft or other crime was committed every day. He escaped

that neighborhood six years ago, when he went off to USC on a scholarship. Even with the change of scenery, he was still rejected by the girls," Dee Dee explained.

"I'm thinking that his being rejected by the girls is one reason why he's dating a transsexual girl," I interjected.

"How is that so?" she asked.

"My cousin, Edwin, is about the same age is DeJuan, and he's dating a woman who's transitioning from a man. He was also rejected by the girls in high school and college; he didn't go on his first date until he asked this woman out three months ago. Edwin lives in San Francisco; he really likes going out with Jennifer. Until eighteen months ago, Jennifer was living as Joey. Granted, he isn't a 'hunk', but he has a good heart. It was hard for me to understand why he got rejected by the other girls, but when I saw how many nice guys like him got rejected so much that they were driven to date transgender girls, I understood why," I explained.

"So, you are saying that the reason why he's dating a transgender woman is his rejection by the other girls?" Mrs. Bronson asked.

"That's been Edwin's experience," I replied.

"That's also been DeJuan's experience," added Dee Dee.

"There have been so many reasons why a man would date a transgender woman. One reason is that he could be a gay male who cannot imagine himself expressing his most romantic and sexual feelings with another male. Another reason could be that he's a transgender who cannot let his feelings come to the

surface. More often, I'm seeing men who date transgender women because he does not see a woman who's been female all her life as being very feminine; they feel that transgender women are more feminine," Dr. Kane then added.

"Have you met their transgender girlfriends yet?" Miss Allen asked us.

"I haven't met Jennifer yet; I keep in touch with Edwin via E-mail," I replied.

"I haven't met DeJuan's girl, either. Her name is Janna; she began life as Juan. She's a fashion designer working for her sister. She began living as a woman two and a half years ago. I still keep in touch with him via E-mail," Dee Dee added.

"Do you feel that being in a school with transgender students has helped you understand why your brothers date transgender women?" Mrs. Bronson asked.

"I think it adds some insight to why DeJuan dates a girl like Janna," Dee Dee replied.

"It definitely adds insight to why Edwin dates Jennifer," I added.

On the way back from support group, I stopped off at the cafeteria to pick up a hamburger and an order of onion rings. When I arrived back at the dorm, I set my backpack on the couch, and went straight for the dining room table. Laura was studying her class materials from today.

"Where are the other girls?" I asked her.

"Cheryl is in her bedroom, working on her French homework. Betty is at the library, doing a book review for her Psychology class," she replied.

"What is she doing her review on?"

"It's a book on psychoanalysis."

"That sounds Freudian," Cheryl said as she walked into the dining room.

"What time do you expect Betty back?" I asked her.

"She said she won't be back until eight-thirty," Cheryl replied.

Betty returned to the room shortly after eight-thirty; by that time, we were done with our homework. I had already changed into my fuchsia nightgown and pink chenille robe when she set her backpack on the chair in our bedroom, and started putting the finishing touches of her review on her laptop computer. "Are you almost finished?" I asked her.

"I've only got a few thoughts and some grammatical corrections to make before class tomorrow," she replied.

After she had her paper printed and in her purple folder for her class, she grabbed some purple lingerie out of her drawer. She asked me to put hang our clean uniforms on the hook between our beds while she was in the bathroom. She emerged five minutes later, wearing a purple chemise. The uniforms were already hung out for tomorrow's classes.

"Who's doing laundry this week?" she asked me.

"It's my turn to do it," I replied.

Betty and I fell asleep shortly after ten-thirty that night. Laura and Cheryl continued to study until eleven o'clock before going to sleep on a very frigid night. It would be bitterly cold throughout that week.

Five: Wendy Michelle Seaford, Junior Class, Los Angeles Campus

April 23: It has been three years since I went under the surgeon's scalpel in San Francisco for the final stage of my transformation from boy to girl. For the first twelve years of my life, I was known as Walter Michael Seaford. I spent those twelve years not far from the school, in Van Nuys. I am thankful for totally supportive parents and siblings; when I told them I wanted to become a girl, my mother asked me why I didn't tell them about this before. I thought they were going to reject me. My older brothers, Jim and Wilbur, and my older sister, Julie, accepted me as the girl I was about to become. My parents, James and Wilma, who own a restaurant in Pacoima, sent me to this school in seventh grade.

I was living with three other girls; all of whom are transsexual. I was sharing a bedroom in my dorm room with Meghan O'Toole; she came from Las Vegas, and spent the first fourteen years of her life as Morris O'Toole before she began living full-time as a girl after finishing the eighth grade. After finishing her sophomore year of high school, she went to Philadelphia for her gender reassignment surgery. My other roommates were Erica Shelby of Palm Springs, an heiress to a real estate fortune, and Ann Paulsen, who was an Air Force brat before coming to Rainbow in the eighth grade. For the first twelve years of her life, Erica was known as Errol; she began living full-time as Erica in the seventh grade, and had her gender reassignment surgery in San Francisco three days after I had mine. Ann began life on an air base in

Germany as Andrew; he had lived on air bases in Japan and Italy before his father, a Lieutenant Colonel, was assigned to Edwards Air Force Base after he finished sixth grade. Once he finished seventh grade, he told his parents he wanted to become a girl. After finishing her freshman year of high school, Ann had her gender reassignment surgery in Philadelphia. The four of us have been living in the same dorm room since our freshman year of high school.

The four of us were getting ready for the annual Prom. It was ten o'clock on a Saturday morning when we woke up. My boyfriend, Greg Victor, brought us two dozen donuts the night before. He would be my date that night. I poured a glass of milk for myself and Erica, while Meghan and Ann made hot tea.

"Who's going to be your prom date tonight?" I asked the other girls.

"Heath Davis is going with me; he attends high school in the San Fernando Valley," Meghan replied.

"I'm going with my boyfriend, Eric Brenner," added Erica.

"Allen Bennett will be taking me to the Prom; he's been very sweet on me since Homecoming," Ann added.

While we were having our breakfast, a student from the Fashion Design class arrived with our prom gowns. Mine would be white with pink lace overlay, while Meghan would be wearing an orange gown; Erica's gown is red, while Ann's gown is mauve. I signed for them; I put them on their respective beds in their bedrooms.

After I returned to the kitchen to finish my donuts and glass of milk, Erica asked: "Who was that at the door?"

"That was one of the students from the Fashion Design class. Our prom gowns have been delivered," I replied.

"Where can we find them?" Ann then asked.

"I set them on your beds," I informed them.

Shortly after noon, the four of us changed into our house outfits. I put on a pink skirt and baby blue T-shirt, Ann changed into a pair of denim shorts and a pink T-shirt, Erica into a white sundress, and Meghan into a white T-shirt and her uniform skirt. We got to the homework we couldn't finish last night. I had the least amount of homework; I still had a few problems to do in my Differential Equations class. Ann was finishing a book review for her Abnormal Psychology class, Erica was finishing assignments for her Portuguese and Foreign Affairs classes, and Meghan was finishing her assignments for Chinese, Advanced Calculus and Foreign Relations classes. I was finished with my homework within fifteen minutes; I decided to call and have a pizza delivered to our dorm room from the school cafeteria. The four of us liked four meats on our pizza, so I ordered one with Italian sausage, pepperoni, ground beef and ham. Ann had just finished her book review when our pizza was delivered around one o'clock.

"How are the others coming along?" I asked her.

"Erica is almost finished with her open-book quiz for her Foreign Affairs class; she finished her Portuguese homework shortly after you finished your Differential Equations homework. Meghan has finished her homework in Foreign Relations class; she is in

the middle of her Advanced Calculus homework and plans to finish her Chinese homework tomorrow," she replied.

I went into the dining room, where Erica and Meghan were working on their homework. "Would you care to take a break?" I asked them.

"We really need one; we're both hungry," Meghan replied before I set the pizza on the dining room table. Ann returned with a pitcher of iced tea and four ice-filled glasses.

After lunch, I took a nap, while Erica and Meghan continued with their homework. Ann was watching a movie in the living room. When Erica finished her homework, she went to her bedroom to take a nap. Meghan joined Ann watching the movie when she got finished with her homework. I woke up from my nap around four o'clock; I set my prom gown, crinoline, lingerie and pumps on my bed while I went into the bathroom to take a long bubble bath. My date was scheduled to arrive at our apartment around six o'clock; the prom would begin at seven-thirty. While I was in the bathtub, Meghan came into the bedroom and knocked on the bathroom door. "May I come in, Wendy?" she asked me.

"The door's unlocked, Meghan," I replied before she let herself in.

"Heath just called; he'll be here around quarter after six. He told me he just picked up his tux at the men's shop," she informed me.

"Greg's wearing the tux from his older brother Tom's wedding. He was an usher when his brother married last month."

"I'm sure he's going to look handsome, Wendy."

"Heath will look handsome; you'll be very beautiful on his arm, Meghan."

"If you will excuse me, I have to get my prom gown on my bed."

I got out of the bathtub around four-thirty; I immediately put on my pink long-line bra and white bikini panties. Meghan started her bubble bath. I spent half an hour lying on my bed in my air-conditioned room while Meghan took her bubble bath. She emerged from the bathroom shortly after five o'clock, wearing her orange long-line bra and matching G-string panties.

I took off my panties long enough to wrap a pink garter belt with white lace overlay around my waist before putting my panties back on, then gently slipping a pair of white lace-top stockings over my legs. Meghan also took off her panties before fastening an orange garter belt around her waist; she put her panties back on before putting on a pair of white lace-top stockings. Both of us put on our garters about the same time; they matched our prom gowns. I slipped a pair of pink satin pumps on my feet before putting my crinoline on; Meghan put on a pair of white high-heeled sandals before putting on our crinolines. We would then put on our prom gowns; we zipped each other's gowns up. I went into the bathroom to put my makeup on, while Meghan used the mirror on her dresser to put her makeup on. I put on my pink barrette to keep my shoulder-length brunette hair out of my eyes, while Meghan put on her orange barrette to keep her long reddish blonde hair out of her eyes.

"You look like a princess!" I exclaimed in awe.

"You're a princess, too!" Meghan complimented.

One of Erica's friends, a freshman named Carol McMillan, came over to our dorm room to take pictures of Erica and Ann in their prom gowns. They had taken showers and changed into their prom gowns after watching the movie on television. Carol came to our campus from El Centro before she started the eighth grade; she had spent time in Juvenile Detention in Imperial County for shoplifting. Her parents, who are local restaurant owners, sent her to Rainbow. Erica tutored her in Earth Science, a subject she was weak in.

Meghan and I got our cameras, and went to the living room, where Carol was taking the pictures. She is an auburn-haired girl of fifteen, five-six with a slender build. "Who are these pretty girls?" she asked her.

"Carol, these are my other two roommates, Wendy Seaford and Meghan O'Toole. Wendy, Meghan, this is Carol McMillan, one of the students I tutored," Erica replied.

"I'm very pleased to meet you both," Carol added.

"The pleasure is mutual, Carol," I told her.

"I'm also very pleased to meet you," added Meghan.

We went outside on the back patio of our dorm room to have our pictures taken; we even hiked the skirts of our gowns to show off our gorgeous legs and garters. "You girls look absolutely gorgeous!" Carol complimented.

"You're quite a pretty girl, yourself," Erica added.

"What kind of guy would go out with such beautiful girls like you?" Carol asked us.

"The guys we usually go out with are often the guys that the girls in the regular schools reject for various reasons. The guy I'm going out with, for example, is considered to be too nice by the standards of most girls. His name is Greg Victor; he's a junior at Van Nuys High School. He knows how to treat the girls with respect. He likes to splurge a little on his date; he's taken me to some of the best restaurants in town. We've even gone to live tapings of television shows together. His family approves of our relationship," I replied.

"Eric Brenner also attends Van Nuys High School; he's a senior, preparing to graduate next month. Like Greg, the other girls avoid him because they consider him too nice. He won't even yell at a girl. He's so respectful of me; we've also been to some of the best restaurants in town. Over the holiday break, I stayed with his family. They really like me, even though I was born a boy. We even took a day trip to Pismo Beach during Spring Break. He's enrolled at the University of Southern California, where he plans to major in aeronautical engineering," Erica added.

"Allen has been very sweet on me since we met at the Homecoming Dance last fall. His father, Albert Bennett, is a psychiatrist in private practice in West Hollywood; he has referred several girls to our school. His mother, Corinne, is a psychologist who's also in private practice. They share office space. Allen had trouble getting dates with the girls at Hollywood High School, so they got him to come to have a look at our school. He was very smitten with me, so he asked me to the Homecoming Dance. We had a romantic dinner afterwards. He's taken me to the symphony, live plays, and over Spring Break, took me to San Diego. He's a junior, and plans to eventually go to law school," Ann then added.

"I met Heath Davis last summer. We were working at Harbor Medical Center; he works there weekends as an orderly, while I worked there as a candy striper; it's through a summer jobs program that the school administers. He's a freshman at UCLA, majoring in pre-medicine. He hopes to go to medical school one day. He has dated some of the other girls at our school; he's dated both the troubled and transgender girls. He's also been rejected for dates by the other girls, both at Canoga High School and UCLA. His family, who runs a deli near the Marina del Rey, are major supporters of our school," Meghan told her.

"So, you girls tend to date the guys who are tossed aside by the other girls," Carol said in an assuming manner.

"Yes, we date the other girls' rejects, so to speak," I informed her.

"That gives me something to consider if I am to start dating while I'm here," Carol added.

"You can wait, girl...many of the guys are well worth the wait," Erica said to her.

It was five minutes before six when we heard a knock on the door. Heath had arrived with a corsage of red carnations for Meghan. "Who is this young lady?" he asked.

"This is Carol McMillan; she's a friend of Erica's," I replied.

"I'm very pleased to meet you, Heath," Carol said calmly.

"I'm pleased to meet you, too, Carol," Heath added.

Right at six o'clock, I heard another knock on the door. It was Greg, arriving with Eric. Greg brought a corsage with pink and yellow roses, while Eric brought Erica a corsage with baby's breath and red carnations. Just two minutes later, Allen would arrive with a corsage of violets and yellow roses for Ann.

"Why don't we get all of you outside for pictures before the prom?" Carol asked us.

"That's a swell idea!" Erica exclaimed.

We stepped onto the patio outside our dorm room, where Carol took pictures of our dates together, followed by individual pictures of our boyfriends. Then, she would take pictures of the four of us with our boyfriends before they put our corsages on our left wrists. She took pictures of our boyfriends putting on our corsages, before finishing up with several photos of us with our dates after they put our corsages on. It was six-thirty when we left our dorm room for the gymnasium, where the prom was being held. Carol returned to her dorm room to relax the remainder of the night.

When we arrived, Carly Dawson, one of my classmates from my Differential Equations class was at the door with one of Erica's teachers, Danielle Hubley. "Wendy, I didn't expect to see you here this early," Carly said to me.

"We decided to get a head start," I said to her.

"You look gorgeous and elegant, Erica!" Danielle complimented.

"You look beautiful, Mrs. Hubley," Erica added.

Greg showed the eight tickets to Carly and Danielle; we went straight into the gymnasium,

which was decorated beautifully for the occasion. We found a table close to the dance floor, where we sat down. The disc jockey was just getting set up for the music. "I'm going to get us something to eat. Do you want anything?" Eric asked us.

"Just a plate of hot dogs and a pitcher of lemonade," Meghan replied.

Two minutes later, Eric and Erica returned with a plate containing sixteen hot dogs and a gallon of lemonade. It was seven o'clock when we were called to a hallway at the back of the gymnasium to have our prom pictures taken. It would be a special moment for all of us to have these pictures taken. The whole picture package was included in the price of the tickets to the prom. When Greg and I walked back into the gym after having our pictures taken, we stole a kiss.

"That's for being such a sweet girl," he whispered.

"You're such a sweet man, Greg," I cooed before we shared another kiss.

Every table and every seat was taken by the time the first dance started shortly after eight o'clock. Eric and Erica were the first on the dance floor; they danced some of the fast dances. Ann and Allen joined them after the first song. When the first slow song started around quarter after eight, Greg asked me: "Wendy, may I have this dance?"

"You certainly may," I replied before he gently took my hand and guided me to the dance floor. We gently took hold of each other as we started dancing. In the middle of the song, we began to hold each other close. I rested my head on his right shoulder as we danced. Another slow song started; we continued to dance as if we were on our own cloud. When that song ended,

we shared a smooch. We sat down to write two names on a piece of paper; we were voting on the Prom Queen and King.

When we sat down at our table, another friend of mine stopped by my table. "Wendy, how are you?" she asked me. I looked to discover that she was Heather d'Angelo. Her brunette hair, very long when we met, is now shoulder length. She is also thirty pounds lighter than she was three years ago; she was in a bright yellow sleeveless prom gown. We've been friends since eighth grade, when she came to Rainbow after being removed from an abusive home in Phoenix by the State of Arizona.

"I'm doing fine, Heather," I replied before asking how she was.

"I'm doing fine, Wendy. Gee, it's been a while since we had a class together."

"It has; the fall semester of our sophomore year, when we took Intermediate Trigonometry together."

"Are you still dating Greg?"

"Yes, I am. In fact, he went to get another plate of hot dogs and another pitcher of lemonade."

"I'm also with a date tonight. His name is Steve Gregory; he's a freshman at Cal State Northridge. He's planning to major in Civil Engineering."

"He sounds like a winner."

"By the way, Wendy...what do you plan to do when you graduate from high school next year?"

"I haven't decided that yet, Heather. I'm torn between Psychology, Secondary Education, Social

Work or pre-Law. Greg's narrowed his choices to two: pre-Law and Secondary Education."

"I'm also down to two choices; Social Work or Criminal Justice. I may consider double majoring in both."

"How has life treated you, Heather?"

"It's been treating me...you know, pretty well. I'm glad my twin brother Heath is out of that situation now."

"When did he become a ward of the court?"

"He became a ward of the court in January, after my mother was arrested for soliciting an undercover federal agent for sexual favors. My father is continuing to serve his sentence for drug trafficking. My Aunt Jen and Uncle Thomas have custody of our younger siblings, Jeff and Shelby-Anne. Jeff is now in the eighth grade, while Shelby-Anne is in the sixth grade."

"Life has been treating me very well. My parents visited me last week; they're very happy with how I'm doing in school this year. My big brother Jim is about to graduate from UCLA with a degree in Secondary Education with emphasis on Social Science; he's interviewing for one of the upcoming openings at one of the Rainbow campuses."

"Yes, I heard that Mrs. Kelly is retiring after this academic year."

"She's been here like, forever."

"I had her for Human Geography last semester."

Greg came back to the table with four hot dogs and a pitcher of lemonade. "I didn't expect to see you here, Heather," he said, somewhat surprised.

"How are you, Greg?" she asked him.

"I'm doing fine, Heather; I'm still with this very gorgeous girl," he replied.

"What kept you, honey?" I asked him.

"I was just talking with Steve Gregory at the food counter. I know him from Van Nuys High," he replied.

"He graduated last year," Heather added.

Steve approached our table a moment later. "How do you know Heather?" he asked me.

"I've known her since the eighth grade. I'm sure she's told you her story," I replied.

"Yes, she told me her story. I shed a tear when she told me about her terrible family situation," he added.

"He's been very understanding and loving," Heather then added before she gave him a kiss.

"After tonight, I might just ask her to be my girl," he told me.

"I think she's a good girl for you," Greg added.

Meghan and Heath were the social butterflies; they were talking with nearly everyone at the dance. They didn't have their first dance until quarter after nine, when they came on the dance floor for a slow dance. Heather and Steve joined them on the dance floor.

Erica and Eric came off the dance floor to sit down; Ann and Allan joined us shortly thereafter. "Who was that you were talking to?" Ann asked me.

"Have you had Heather d'Angelo in any of your classes?" I asked them.

"I only had her for Elementary Algebra during the spring semester of eighth grade," Ann replied.

"We're presently taking Portuguese together," added Erica.

"She's with this handsome guy named Steve Gregory tonight. He's pretty crazy about her," I told them.

"Is she crazy about him?" Ann asked.

"She's smitten with him," Erica replied.

"I remember when she came here three years ago. She had suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, and was acting in a very unfeminine way. She also had never been around transgender girls before. By the end of the year, we were best friends. She spent the first summer with a host family in Pasadena; she even sent me a get well card when I had my gender reassignment surgery. Her attitude toward the guys was very negative at first; but, after we started hanging out together, her attitude mellowed. I even taught her how to tease the boys. She met Steve at the Valentine's Dance a couple of months ago," I explained.

It was ten o'clock when the Prom Court was introduced. Erica was on the court as one of two transgender girls; the other was Paige McClendon. She's five-nine with an average build, her blonde hair down just past her shoulders; she was wearing a strapless fuchsia prom gown. Paige came to our

school in her freshman year of high school after spending the first fourteen years of her life as Philip, the boy she really wasn't. Originally from Elko, Nevada, she had her gender surgically reassigned ten months ago in San Francisco. The two troubled girls on the Court were both wards of the court. The first one is Marcia Barrett, who came to our school from the Watts section of Los Angeles after seventh grade. She's an African-American girl, five-seven with frizzy dark hair and wearing a white sleeveless gown with gold sequins. She never knew her father; he was serving time for armed robbery in Missouri. The other troubled girl, Susan Zhao, is an Asian-American, five-eight with a slender build and wearing a gold Asian-style gown. She came to our school from L.A.'s Chinatown; her mother was serving time for her part of a sex trafficking ring, while her father is a political prisoner in the People's Republic of China.

Last year's Prom Queen, Lisa Francis, and Prom King, Cody Saloman, were in attendance. Lisa will be graduating next month; she has won a scholarship to San Diego State, where she will be planning to major in Social Work. Cody, a freshman at San Diego State, has just declared journalism as his major. Lisa has been a ward of the court since her freshman year of high school, when her mother was sent to prison for embezzling over a quarter of a million dollars from the school board in Escondido. Her father, divorced from her mother since she was nine years old, was living in South Africa and could not take care of her, although he sent her a huge monthly stipend. Cody's father teaches Mathematics, specializing in Geometry and Algebra on campus. The disc jockey asked: "Will the faculty advisor for the Prom Committee, Mrs. Joan Baxter, please come to the microphone?"

Mrs. Baxter, from the Social Science department, has the four of us for different classes. She is Erica's instructor in Foreign Affairs, while Ann has her for

International Relations, Meghan for Foreign Relations, and I have her for Domestic Affairs class. She lives just a mile from campus with her husband and youngest daughter, who's a junior at a nearby high school. Their youngest son and oldest daughter were away at college, while their oldest son was teaching Information Systems and Security at Rainbow's campus in Seattle. The disc jockey handed her the microphone; she paused for a moment before she asked us: "How are you doing tonight?"

Everyone applauded before she continued: "We're very glad you could come to the annual Rainbow-L.A. Prom; we hope we have made it a memorable night for all of you. We've come to the moment we will make one girl's most special dream come true. Before we announce the name of the Prom Queen, let's introduce last year's Prom Queen, Lisa Francis!"

A recording of Lisa's voice came on the sound system. "Being the Prom Queen at Rainbow-L.A. has been a dream come true. Over the past year, I've been an advocate for troubled girls like myself on this campus. I hope to continue my work with troubled girls as a social worker. I'm very happy to be associated with this school over the past five years; I will continue to support Rainbow in any way I can as the years go on." Lisa took her place just inside the gazebo that was set up for the Prom Court.

When the recording was finished, Mrs. Baxter announced: "And now, here's last year's Prom King, Cody Saloman!" Another recording, this one of Cody's voice, came on the sound system. "My father, Carlton Saloman, instilled in me an appreciation for life from an early age. He is very devoted to this school and the students he teaches. I hope to continue the family tradition by giving of my time and some of whatever money I make to this school. My older brother, Carl, is carrying on the tradition as a

first-year teacher in Information Systems, Security and Technology here at Rainbow-L.A. I am presently studying journalism at San Diego State; I hope to make a difference in our world." He took his place just inside the gazebo, on the opposite side of the entrance from Lisa. Once the recording ended, a hush fell across the gymnasium.

Mrs. Baxter came on the microphone; her voice on the sound system was the only sound in the room. "I have the envelope with the names of this year's Prom Queen and King in my hand. Drum roll, please!" she announced as the disc jockey played a recording of a drum roll. Over the drum roll, she made this announcement: "This year's Prom Queen is...Miss Wendy Seaford!" I was stunned beyond belief to hear my name announced as this year's Prom Queen. The disc jockey repeated the drum roll, over which this announcement was made: "The Prom King for this year's Rainbow-L.A. Prom is...Mr. Gregory Victor!" He was just as stunned as I was when he heard his name announced. We locked elbows, my right elbow to his left, as we walked down the red carpet to the gazebo, where Lisa put the crown on my head. After I had the crown fastened on my head, Greg was given a scepter by Cody. We posed for pictures with the Prom Court, as well as last year's Prom Queen and King, before we danced to a slow song.

It was eleven-thirty when the last dance ended. Ann, Erica and Meghan, along with their boyfriends, took me and Greg to an after-Prom dinner at a nearby restaurant. We would have steaks, baked potatoes, salads and pitchers of unsweetened iced tea.

The other girls got back to the dorm room around one o'clock. Greg and I walked around campus for another half hour. "This has been one memorable night," he said as we were holding hands.

"I didn't expect to be named Prom Queen," I told him.

"How long has it been since a transgender girl was Prom Queen?" he asked.

"It's been three years since a transgender girl was Prom Queen," I replied.

"Wendy, this is a night I will never forget. I never thought I would be named Prom King until my name was announced by Mrs. Baxter."

"I will also remember tonight forever, Greg. I couldn't imagine how stunned and surprised I would be when my name was called as Prom Queen. Many girls, regardless of whether they were born male or female, dream of their prom night; being selected as Prom Queen is the ultimate dream. Tonight, our ultimate dreams have come true."

"You've made me feel like a prince, babe."

"I feel so much like a princess who has just gotten married, honey."

"What if I told you that when I'm ready to get married, you will be my bride?"

"That's exactly the same question I have wanted to ask. I can easily see you as my groom one day. I promise that when I'm ready to get married, it will be to you."

"Wendy, I love you more than any other girl in the world."

"Greg, I have never loved a man more than I love you." After I said that, we shared a kiss. Before long, we were sharing deep, tender kisses before they be-

came very passionate. Before I knew it, he was planting kisses on my neck. "Oh, Greg, you make me feel so feminine!" I cooed as he was kissing me on my neck.

When I returned to my dorm room around two o'clock in the morning, Erica and Ann were already asleep. Meghan had just gotten out of her prom gown, and changed into a mauve baby doll nightie. "I'd take it you and Greg made out," she said.

"We made out, all right; we shared deep and passionate kisses; he even kissed me on my neck," I told her.

"Did he also make any promises?"

"All he said that when he's ready to marry, he wants me to be his bride."

"Did you tell him that you've dreamed of being his bride?"

"I told him that I can easily see him as my groom; I also promised that when I'm ready to marry, it will be to him."

"You two have been together so long; I won't be surprised if you two marry one day."

"I won't be surprised, either."

Meghan and I went to our room, where she helped me take off my prom gown. I took off my crown, and set it on my dresser. I changed from the lingerie I was wearing under my gown into a red teddy. I finally fell asleep around two-thirty in the morning; a special day and night had finally come to an end.

Six: Rosalie Hanford, Senior Class, Long Island Campus

May 31: It's going to be a hectic next forty-eight hours in my life. Today, I would be graduating from the school where I spent the last four years. Tomorrow, I would be taking a young attorney named Eric Binford as my husband. I've come a long way from this time four years ago, when I was in Juvenile Detention in Barnstable, Massachusetts, serving time for assaulting another student at the middle school I attended. I learned how to be a proper lady, went through the experience of having transsexual girls as my roommates, and raised my grade point average from a 1.3 in eighth grade to a 4.0 in my senior year of high school. I had already won a scholarship, and was admitted to Harvard, so I could be near the man who will become my husband.

Trouble with the law is in my family's history. My father is presently serving a twenty-year sentence for his part in a Ponzi scheme. He was sentenced shortly after I transferred from Juvenile Detention to Rainbow. My mother was sent to prison when I was ten years old; she's serving a twenty-year sentence for her part in the contract murder of her boss. My brother, Ross, is now twenty-four years old, serving as a First Lieutenant in the United States Army, and living on a base in Germany with his wife, Karen, who was introduced to him by my Uncle Eric and Aunt Liz. My younger brother, Robert, now sixteen years old, and younger sister, Rachel, now fourteen, are living with Uncle Eric and Aunt Liz on the island of Maui in Hawaii.

My three roommates throughout the years at Rainbow are Jennifer Beauregard, Stephanie Oliver

and Karen Harvey. When I arrived as a high school freshman, Jennifer had gone through the final stage of a major change in her life. She was born in Nashua, New Hampshire as Jeffrey. She came out to her parents and older sister, Janelle, after finishing the sixth grade. Her two older brothers, twins John and Jim, were already in college. She had her gender reassignment surgery in Philadelphia three days after she finished the eighth grade. She's five-eleven with an average build; her short blonde hair was done in a bob. Stephanie came from Albany, New York, where she spent the first eleven years of her life as Eric. Coming to Rainbow as an eleven-year-old seventh grader, she had her operation in San Francisco the same day Jennifer had hers. She's five-eight with a slender build and willowy brunette hair. Her mother owns a bridal salon in Schenectady with her two sisters and a transsexual cousin. Karen, who was born as Kevin in Victoriaville, Quebec, Canada, began living full-time as a girl when she finished the seventh grade. When she had her operation in Montreal after finishing her freshman year of high school, she was one of the youngest patients the surgeon ever operated on. Karen is five-five with a slender build; her shoulder-length brunette hair was done in a perm. Jennifer would be my maid of honor, with Stephanie and Karen as two of my bridesmaids at my wedding. My cousins Eric, now an English Literature teacher at Rainbow in Baltimore, and Michelle, who has just finished her junior year at Hofstra, would be joining me.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning on Graduation Day. Jennifer, Stephanie, Karen and I were having lunch at a table inside the cafeteria. We ordered our favorite dishes for our final day as students. My favorite was the chicken and noodles. Jennifer had the spaghetti and meatballs, Stephanie had the salmon and rice, while Karen had Salisbury steak. We shared

a pitcher of iced tea. "Where are you planning to go after graduation?" I asked my roommates.

"I've been accepted at Stanford; I'm planning to become a social worker," Jennifer replied.

"I'm going to the University of Washington, majoring in psychology," added Stephanie.

"I've been accepted at the Sorbonne in Paris. I plan to pursue a degree in international business," Karen then added.

"What kind of business?" Jennifer asked her.

"I hope to import wedding gowns into the United States," Karen replied.

"What are you going to do after graduation?" Stephanie asked me.

"I'm headed to Harvard this fall; I plan to study law. Eric has just been accepted at law school there," I replied.

"Have you decided where you're going on your honeymoon?" Jennifer then asked me.

"We're planning to go on a train trip across Canada. We fly from Kennedy to Vancouver on Sunday, and leave Monday for a week-long trip. A week from this coming Monday, we fly to Boston from Halifax. We plan to set up housekeeping in Cambridge, just a few blocks from the campus," I informed her.

"Who's going to be giving you away?" Karen then asked.

"Mr. Edwards will be giving me away. I've taken several Social Science classes from him. He and his

wife have been mentoring me over the years," I replied.

"I'm assuming that Mrs. Edwards will fill in as Mother of the Bride?" asked Stephanie.

"Yes, she is. Uncle Eric and Aunt Liz will not be able to make it. Next week is final exams week for Robert and Rachel," I replied.

"Didn't your brother just get transferred?" was Jennifer's next question.

"He started his two-week furlough yesterday. His next assignment will be as a Public Information Officer at Fort Carson in Colorado. He and Karen will be arriving at JFK tonight; they will be at the wedding tomorrow," I told her.

After lunch, we went back to the dorm room to shower and change into our dresses, caps and gowns. Stephanie selected a pink chiffon dress, while Karen was in an antique white chiffon dress, and Jennifer put on a turquoise satin dress. I selected my red chiffon dress. Our caps and gowns were Kelly green. The graduation ceremony would be broadcast live over the Internet; Ross and Karen would be watching while on layover at Manchester.

We went to the gymnasium around one-thirty in the afternoon, where the families of my roommates were waiting. I got a big surprise when I arrived at the gym. "Rosa?" a female voice asked. I immediately noticed that it was my cousin Michelle. "I thought this day would never come," said my other cousin, Eric.

"What are you two doing on Long Island?" I asked them.

"I'm on break between the spring semester and the summer session at Hofstra. I'm starting my senior year there in the fall," Michelle replied.

"We had our graduation at Rainbow-Baltimore yesterday," Eric added.

"What are you teaching there?" I asked him.

"I'm teaching English Literature," he replied.

Jennifer approached me while I was talking to my cousins. "Who are these lovely people?" she asked me.

"Jennifer Beauregard, these are my cousins, Eric Hanford, Junior and Michelle Hanford. This is Jennifer, one of my roommates," I replied.

"It's a pleasure to meet you both," she said with a smile.

"The pleasure is mutual," Eric added.

"I'm very pleased to meet you, Jennifer," Michelle told her.

"Would you like to meet my other roommates?" I asked them.

"That would be a great idea," Eric replied before the four of us walked toward Karen and Stephanie.

"I see you have family here. I didn't expect anyone from your family to come," Karen said with an element of surprise.

"The lady bears a resemblance to you, Rosa," Stephanie added.

"Stephanie Oliver, Karen Harvey, I'd like for you to meet my cousins, Eric Hanford, Junior and Michelle Hanford. These are my other two roommates, Stephanie and Karen," I said in an introductory manner.

"I'm very pleased to meet you girls," Eric added.

"You're quite beautiful girls, like Rosa and Jennifer," added Michelle.

"We're going to take our seats in the gym. Your fiancé is expecting us," Eric informed us.

"Now is a good time; they're getting ready to gather the graduating class," I added.

I joined my roommates and the other graduating seniors in a classroom near the gymnasium. "How many girls are in our graduating class?" Karen asked.

"There are seventy-two girls in this year's class; twenty-nine troubled girls and forty-three transgender girls," I replied.

We took our seats in the front row for the graduation ceremony, which began with a welcome by the Director of Personnel for all the campuses, Jackie Avildsen. After the brief welcome, she announced: "Now, I'd like to introduce the Class Valedictorian for this year's class at Rainbow-Long Island. When she came to our campus as a freshman, she had just been made a ward of the court in Massachusetts. Her life was a mess when she arrived. She spent a year in Juvenile Detention in Barnstable, Massachusetts for assault and battery. Both of her parents are serving time in prison; however, her brother has enjoyed success as a soldier in the United States Army. Both of her younger siblings are honor students on the Hawaiian island of Maui. Her cousin is a teacher in Eng-

lish Literature at the Rainbow campus in Baltimore. She has turned her life completely around. She's been an honor student all four years at Rainbow, become more feminine in her deportment and behavior, and has won a scholarship to Harvard, where she will be pursuing a law degree. Ladies and gentlemen, this year's Class Valedictorian, Rosa Hanford."

I walked up to the stage; I approached the podium, where Jackie and I embraced. I came up to the microphone, and talked about my experience. "I'd like to take you back four years. On the first day of the new academic year, a troubled young woman arrived at the campus of The Rainbow School for Girls on Long Island. Her life was completely messed up. She had just served a year in Juvenile Detention for assault and battery. She had just been made a ward of the court in the State of Massachusetts. Both of her parents are serving time in prison. Her father is serving time for his part in a Ponzi scheme. Her mother is serving time for being part of a murder-for-hire scheme. Her younger siblings had just been sent to live with their aunt and uncle in Hawaii. Her older brother had just been accepted to West Point. Who was this troubled young girl? That troubled girl was me," I said before those in attendance applauded.

I continued: "I did not know what to expect when I came to Rainbow. I knew of their reputation for educating troubled girls like me before I came here. My counselor when I was in Juvenile Hall told me about it. What I discovered was a whole new world. I studied harder than I ever did. I learned how to be a proper young lady. I stopped being aggressive in my behavior. This experience has given me a host of new friends; my classmates, roommates and teachers have taken me under their wing, and taught me very important things about life, study habits, and being the best girl I can be."

After another round of applause, I went on: "On my first day at Rainbow, I was assigned to three beautiful girls who became my best friends. It would also be the first time I would share my life with transgender girls. Jennifer Beauregard and Stephanie Oliver underwent operations for gender reassignment the summer before I arrived. We told each other our stories in our dorm room the first night of our freshman year. Karen Harvey was preparing for her gender reassignment surgery. The first thing I learned was that it doesn't matter whether you were born a boy or a girl; you're a girl, first and foremost. Another important lesson I learned was that transgender people are people, just like you and me. We all have the same hopes and dreams. When we finished our freshman year of high school, Karen had her operation. I realized that we're here on this Earth to make a better place for our generation and for generations to come."

Yet another round of applause rung out, before I continued: "Jennifer, Karen and Stephanie taught me that if I want to meet my goals, I had to work very hard for them. I learned the value of hard work through my studies, and through the summer jobs program, which helped me become more focused. I worked as a clerk at a local law firm during the summer months. My hard work also resulted in an unexpected surprise: the scholarship I got from Harvard. I hope to pursue a dream to be a lawyer, working with either juveniles or transgender clients. Another unexpected surprise was when I met Eric Binford last fall at a Career Day on campus. It happened to be on my eighteenth birthday. I asked him about what I need to do to become a lawyer; we soon began exchanging E-mails. I was able to get permission from school administrators to date him; on Valentine's Day, he asked me to marry him. Tomorrow, I will be a married woman. My hope is that in a few years, I will be talking to you about careers in law."

After more applause, I concluded: "This school has really turned my life around. Four years ago, it seemed that I was headed for a criminal life. Today, I'm on my way to eventually reaching my full potential. The Rainbow School for Girls has helped me turn my life around, and I hope that future generations of girls, especially troubled girls like me, will find that Rainbow will change their lives. I am forever grateful to my teachers, my classmates, and most of all, to my roommates, Jennifer, Karen and Stephanie. You have made me the woman I am today." They shed a tear as I finished my speech; I got a standing ovation before I sat down.

We would be accepting our high school diplomas in alphabetical order, according to last name. The first name called: "Corinne Danielle Abner." I went through two Physical Education classes with her, one in my freshman year and one in my senior year. Like me, she was a ward of the court in Massachusetts. She was going on to Syracuse to study Botany and Horticulture. The fifth name called: "Jennifer Collette Beauregard." My name, Rosalie Catherine Hanford, was the seventeenth name called. The next name called: "Karen Melissa Harvey". The fiftieth name called was "Stephanie Erica Oliver." After the seventy-second and last name, Josephine Danielle Wyman, was called, Jackie was back on the microphone to introduce the speaker who would deliver the Benediction. "Ladies and gentlemen, to deliver this year's Benediction, the chair of the Social Science department, Mr. Vernon Edwards."

We all bowed our heads, while he said: "Heavenly Father, we thank you for these young women, who are going forth into a troubled world. Give them your wisdom, a heart for service to our community, our nation and our world, and the patience to work toward a better world. We thank you for the word 'education', and for the opportunity to advance the mean-

ing of the word. God, dismiss us with your blessing. Amen."

The four of us relaxed in our dorm room; we were due at the campus chapel at six-thirty for the wedding rehearsal. We put on fresh perfume before we walked across the campus to the chapel, where I was met by Mr. and Mrs. Edwards and their thirteen-year-old daughter Paige, who would be the junior bridesmaid. Paige is five-seven with long reddish blonde hair and a slender build; she's tall for a girl her age. Her mother, Priscilla, also has reddish blonde hair, albeit shoulder length. She's five-nine, and looks younger than her thirty-nine years could attest to. Vince, wearing a red button-down shirt, khaki slacks and brown loafers, has salt-and-pepper hair and looks a little younger than his fifty-two years. It was six-fifteen; Eric, his family and groomsmen had not shown up yet. "I'm glad you made it," I told them.

"Priscilla and I are very glad to be here. It's too bad your aunt and uncle won't be able to make it for your special day, we're very proud to stand in for them," Vern said.

"Paige will be very beautiful tomorrow when she walks down the aisle," Jennifer complimented.

"Why, thank you, Jennifer! All of us girls will be very beautiful come tomorrow," Paige added.

The Reverend Karen Stephens, the Chief of Chaplains at the school, arrived about twenty after six, along with Erica Roberts, the fashion design instructor who also doubles as the wedding coordinator. Reverend Stephens is known to the students as Pastor Karen. "You're looking beautiful, Rosa," Mrs. Roberts complimented.

"You're looking great, Mrs. Roberts!" I returned the compliment.

Eric finally arrived with his family and groomsmen shortly before six-thirty. He's clearly the tallest of the group at six-five with an average build and short medium brown hair. The best man is Ed McMartin, a classmate of his from Harvard. He's six-three with a muscular build; he has blonde hair and a beard; the kind of man Jennifer has dreamed of. The other groomsmen are his younger brother, Ervin; he's six feet tall with his light brown hair done in a crew cut, and Frank McMichael, another classmate from Harvard, five-ten with short medium brown hair and an Abraham Lincoln-style beard. The junior groomsman is Michael Binford, Eric's fourteen-year-old brother. He looks like a younger version of Eric, although he's just five feet, nine inches tall. We spent an hour practicing our roles for the wedding ceremony; shortly after seven-thirty, we went over to a nearby restaurant, where Erica Roberts and her husband, Harry, were hosting us for a rehearsal dinner.

Before we ate dinner, my cousin Michelle proposed a toast. "Rosa, I know that your uncle Eric, Aunt Liz, and cousins Bob and Rachel couldn't be with us tonight. It's a busy time of year for them, with Bob and Rachel preparing for final exams and your aunt and uncle hosting wedding parties at their restaurant this weekend. They send you their best wishes as you and Eric tie the knot. To your aunt and uncle," she said.

Once we finished the toast, I got a text over my cell phone. "What is it, darling?" Eric asked me.

"It's my brother Ross and sister-in-law Karen. They've just arrived at JFK," I replied.

"Aren't they on furlough between assignments?" Jennifer then asked.

"They're between assignments; he's supposed to report to Fort Carson in ten days," I replied.

"Where are they going to stay?" Stephanie inquired.

"They're staying at a hotel near the school," I informed her.

My cousin Eric also said something. "As you know, Rosa's parents can't be with us for this special occasion. As many of you know, they're serving time in prison. We hope the penal system in the State of New York is treating them well, and that they're on their best behavior. I probably would think that they would be proud of you, especially in the way you turned your life around. You've found a good man, even if he shares the same first name as mine."

It was ten-thirty when the rehearsal dinner finally broke up. Eric and his groomsmen made their way to a hotel nearby; it would be a different one from the one Ross and my sister-in-law Karen would be staying at. We got back to our dorm room around eleven o'clock. The four of us finally took off our dresses; I put on a royal blue nightgown, while Jennifer put on a white teddy, Stephanie put on a pink chemise, and Karen put on a lavender baby doll nightie. We sat in the living room, drinking our last remaining cans of ginger ale and looking back at our years at Rainbow.

"It's hard to believe that it was four years ago that the four of us began sharing a dorm room together. I was the worst of the group, having been through the court system, both as a defendant and as a ward of the court. If there's one person who's been the most

changed because of attending Rainbow, it's me," I said, from the heart.

"When you came to join us, I had just been through my operation. I knew that being around transgender girls was new to you. I told you my life story, and you listened attentively. You had some questions about why we needed to become girls, even after spending twelve or thirteen years as boys. I was glad to answer your questions," Jennifer added.

"I had also been through my operation when you joined us. Our previous roommate was also a troubled girl like you; she was a ward of the court in Virginia. She was transferred to the campus in Baltimore; we were very happy to have you join us. I helped you learn the finer points of being a girl. I remember how aggressive you were at first; I thought you would need your feminine ways refined. Through the hard work we've done together, you've become quite the young lady. You've come a long way from the aggressive tomboy you were," Stephanie told her.

"When we got together, I still had not had my operation. I knew that my having a female body above the waist and a male body below was a shock to you at first. As I explained myself to you, you began to realize why we needed to do what we did to become the girls we felt we should have been to begin with. You sent me a get well card when I had my operation. Rosa, the changes you've made over the last four years inspired us to be better girls, just as much as the changes we've been through inspired you to be a better girl. We're very happy that we've been together through thick and thin over the past four years, and the three of us are very proud to be with you tomorrow as you get married," Karen said from the heart.

"Shall we make a pledge?" Stephanie asked.

"What shall we pledge to do?" I then asked.

"Let's make a pledge to be there for each other whenever we get married," Stephanie replied.

"I think that would be an excellent idea," Jennifer added.

"I'm in," added Karen.

"Should you get married, I'll be there for you. I'll even be matron of honor, if you like," I said with an air of commitment.

"You know I'll be there for you all," Stephanie assured us.

June 1: It was eleven o'clock in the morning when we woke up. The wedding ceremony itself was set to begin at five o'clock in the afternoon. I had most of my personal effects packed up and shipped to the home Eric and I would share in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Jennifer, Karen and Stephanie had one more week to pack up and move out of the dorm room we shared for the last four years. Our gowns, which the students in the Fashion Design classes made for us, were in the capable hands of Erica Roberts and would be delivered to the chapel before we arrived.

The staff at the cafeteria had made bacon, eggs, hash browns and toast for us, along with a gallon of orange juice, and delivered them to our dorm room shortly after we woke up. We would have a leisurely breakfast. We took our baths between noon and two o'clock, getting ready for the big event. We were due at the chapel at three-thirty to get ready. I changed into a red T-shirt, a pair of blue jeans and a pair of red flats, while Jennifer got into a white T-shirt, blue denim skirt and white flats, Stephanie changed into a floral print sundress and brown sandals, and Karen

got into a pink top, stonewashed denim blue jeans and a pair of pink flats. It was around three-fifteen that I would leave our dorm room for the last time with Jennifer, Karen and Stephanie. My suitcase, which was packed for our honeymoon, would be delivered to the Bridal suite of the Waldorf-Astoria, where we would be spending our wedding night.

Erica Roberts was awaiting our arrival when we stepped into the chapel a few seconds before three-thirty. We followed her to the Bride's Room, which was located on the second floor of the chapel. Paige Edwards was awaiting our arrival; she was already in her sleeveless pink bridesmaid's gown. In a white flower girl's gown was Erica's oldest daughter, seven-year-old Heather. The bridesmaids changed from their street clothes into their lingerie before putting on their pink satin pumps, followed by their gowns. Erica helped Jennifer get into her pink bridesmaid's gown; Stephanie and Karen helped each other get into their bridesmaid's gowns. I went into a bathroom to change from my street clothes into my bridal lingerie. When I came out, the hairdresser, a friend of Erica's from New York, arrived to do Paige's hair, followed by the bridesmaids' hair. My long, red hair would be done in an updo before my bridesmaids helped me get into my bridal gown. It was a full-skirted, sleeveless ball gown with no train. I would be wearing a chapel-length veil with a rhinestone tiara. Another one of Erica's friends would be taking pictures of the wedding. After we finished the candid pictures, I posed for pictures in my wedding gown.

It was around twenty minutes to five when I got a surprise. "I'm so glad to be here to see you get married!" a female voice said. It was my sister-in-law, Karen. She was in a pink satin dress. Ross was with her, in his U.S. Army Class A uniform, or what is

known as a dress uniform. “Congratulations, sister!” Ross said before he gave me a smooch.

“Who is this couple?” Erica asked me.

“Erica Roberts, this is my brother, First Lieutenant Ross Hanford of the U.S. Army, and his wife, Karen. Ross, Karen, this is Erica Roberts; she teaches Fashion Design here at Rainbow,” I replied.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, at last. Rosa has told me all about you,” Erica said to them.

“We’re very pleased to meet you, too,” Karen added.

“Who designed the gowns?” Ross asked.

“My students designed the gowns for the entire party,” Erica replied.

“I’ve heard about the students making gowns for all sorts of occasions,” Ross added.

My roommates approached us. “Ross, Karen, I believe you remember my roommates, Jennifer Beauregard, Stephanie Oliver and Karen Harvey,” I said to them.

“I remember Rosa sending pictures of them via E-mail; you’re as beautiful as she described,” my cousin Karen complimented.

“Why, thank you,” my roommate Karen said, blushing at the compliment.

“I remember meeting you when I took an October weekend during your freshman year of high school to visit you from West Point. You have grown into beautiful young women,” Ross added.

"If you will excuse us, we'd like to take our seats," Karen informed me before she left the room with Ross.

Around five minutes to five o'clock, Mr. Edwards arrived to walk me down the aisle. He was in his gray tuxedo. "Are you ready, Rosa?" he asked me.

"I'm as ready as I'll ever be," I replied, only showing a slight case of the pre-wedding jitters.

Right at five o'clock, the procession began. Heather Roberts was first down the aisle; she would be on the arm of the ring bearer, Kevin Binford, Eric's eight-year-old nephew and the son of his older brother, Kevin. Paige would be the next one to walk down the aisle, taking Michael's arm when she got to the end of the aisle. Karen would follow her; she took Frank's arm before taking their places. Stephanie would walk down the aisle next; she would take Ervin's arm as she approached the altar. Erica put the blusher of the veil over my face as Jennifer walked down the aisle, meeting Ed at the altar. The groomsmen were all in gray tuxedos, with black bow ties. Eric would then take his place at the altar as I was getting ready for my walk down the aisle, on the arm of one of my favorite teachers.

The processional music for my walk down the aisle began at five minutes after five. I was all smiles as I walked down the aisle. When I arrived at the end of the aisle, Mr. Edwards gave me a smooch. He then turned to Eric, shook his hand, and said: "Take care of my favorite student."

"I will, Mr. Edwards," he assured him.

I took Eric's arm, and we approached Pastor Karen, wearing an antique white pantsuit, white blouse and white pumps. When the music stopped, she be-

gan her words. "Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today, in the sight of God, to join Rosalie and Eric in the bond of Holy Matrimony. Over the past few months, they have prepared for this day and a new chapter in their lives. They have also prayed at length about the decision they have made, and about the vows they are going to exchange," she said.

When it came time to ask if there was anyone who would show just cause why we shouldn't be joined together, a hush fell over the chapel. After a minute, the ceremony continued.

When it came time to recite our vows, I went first. "I, Rosalie, take you, Eric, as my wedded husband. From the time we first laid eyes on each other, I knew that you were the man for me. I promise to be with you through good times and bad throughout the remainder of our lives. I make this commitment to you on this day, and I will remain committed to making our marriage work from this day forward."

Eric recited his vows next. "I, Eric, take you, Rosalie, as my wedded wife. From the first time we met, I knew that you were the woman for me. I solemnly promise to be with you through good times and bad, for the rest of our lives. I am making this commitment to you today, and I will forever be committed to making our marriage work."

We lit the unity candle after we recited our vows, symbolizing the joining of two people into one unit. After we returned to the altar, Kevin came up with the pillow with our wedding bands on it. Eric untied the ribbon that kept our rings on the pillow. I picked up Eric's wedding band, gently took his left hand in mine, while I placed the ring on his finger with my right hand. As I was placing it on the ring finger of his left hand, I said: "Eric, with this ring, I thee wed."

After I put the ring securely on his finger, Eric gently took my left hand in his, and slid the ring halfway down my finger with his right hand. "Rosalie, with this ring, I thee wed," he said with commitment.

Before the end of the ceremony, Pastor Karen asked me: "Rosalie Adele Hanford, do you take this man, Eric Sylvester Binford, to be your lawful wedded husband; to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do you part?"

"I do," I replied with commitment.

"Eric Sylvester Binford, do you take this woman, Rosalie Adele Hanford, to be your lawful wedded wife; to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do you part?" Pastor Karen asked him.

"I do," he replied with the same level of commitment.

"With the power vested in me by the State of New York, I now pronounce you man and wife," she said to us. I turned to face Jennifer; she lifted my blusher. I turned to face Eric, and gave him a long, tender kiss and a warm embrace before we turned to face our guests.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you, Mr. and Mrs. Eric Binford," Pastor Karen told the guests before we walked up the aisle to the front of the chapel to receive our guests. We stayed so we could have our pictures and that of the bridal party taken, while our guests went to a nearby hotel ballroom for the reception.

We arrived around six-thirty to thunderous applause. We sat down at our places at the head table. Ed offered us a toast: "Eric, you've been one of my best friends for the last five years. I often wondered who would share your life's journey. I was amazed at how mature Rosa was for a high school girl. Rosa, you have shown great class during his courtship of you. I wish you both all the success in the world as you embark on the next chapter in your lives." He paused for a moment, before he loudly proclaimed: "To the bride and groom!"

Jennifer stood up next to make her toast. "For the past four years, you've been one of my best friends. When you introduced us to Eric, Stephanie, Karen and I thought he was a great guy. Little did we know you two would be married today; we wish you the best; don't be a stranger!" she told us.

After a dinner of baked chicken, roasted potatoes, garden salad and stewed apples, we had our first dance to a standard called "The Windmills of Your Mind." After the first dance, we danced for about an hour before we cut the first piece of our wedding cake. Everyone laughed as I stuffed a piece into his mouth; he stuffed a piece of cake into my mouth after I did my part.

Shortly before ten o'clock, it was time for me to toss my bouquet to the single women. I had my back turned while the single women were getting ready to try and catch the bouquet. On the count of three, I tossed the bouquet behind my back. The next thing I heard was cheers; I turned around to see that Jennifer caught my bouquet.

The single women cleared the dance floor; it was now the single men's turn to catch my bridal garter. Ed brought a chair from one of the tables, and set it down in the middle of the dance floor. I would hike

the skirt of my wedding gown in a playful manner until I revealed my white lace garter with a pink ribbon wrapped around it. Eric would get down on one knee, like he did the night he proposed, slowly taking it off with his hands. He didn't want to use his teeth, as he thought it wasn't civilized. He turned his back to the single men and tossed the garter. I was surprised that the ring bearer caught it! "It's going to be a while before Kevin is old enough to get married," he whispered to me. After the garter toss, the photographer had Kevin and Jennifer pose.

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It was shortly after midnight that Eric and I were laying down on our heart-shaped bed in the Bridal Suite at the Waldorf-Astoria. We had just finished consummating our marriage. Eric was in his red boxers and white tank top shirt; I was in my white baby doll nightie. "It's hard to believe; four years ago, I was getting ready to go to The Rainbow School for Girls. Little did I know that I would be a married woman at this point in time," I whispered to him.

"I didn't even know you a year ago. I did not know how much my life would change when I met you at Career Day last fall. All that time we spent getting to know each other made me realize that you were the girl for me. I'm very happy I married you, Rosa," he said whisperingly to me.

"Eric, I love you, now and for all eternity," I cooed.

"Rosa, I love you, now and forever," he whispered before we kissed each other good night.

If these past four years at Rainbow taught me something, it's that I'm a much better and more mature person now than the deeply troubled, aggres-

sive, violent girl I came to campus as. I certainly made my fair share of trouble; now, I'm getting ready to embark on a new future, not only as a wife, but also as a law student. Jennifer, Stephanie and Karen will also be embarking on their new chapters as they prepare for their careers. My four years of living with three transsexual girls also taught me that their lives and careers matter just as much as my life and that of all other genetic females. Living with these three young women is a time of my life I will cherish forever, just as much as my wedding day.

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