

Translating Carter

Only one person knew the truth, Carter thought as she glanced at herself in the mirror before leaving for school. Her baby blue eyes grazed over her long sinewy legs that complemented her lanky frame. She wondered again for the third time this morning if her jeans fit right near the belt buckle, the creases of the denim not quite concealing the parts of herself she tried to hide. She slid her hand across her midsection and admired the gentle ripples of her abdominal muscles and smiled as she looked down at her hands. Calloused and rough from gripping the metal exhaust pipes at her father's auto body shop. Workers hands he had called them, built for the trades. Her dad then laughed "The apple doesn't fall too far from the tree now does it, but don't be too concerned with following your father's path, especially not with that sharp mind of yours." She wondered if she could see herself following her father's path. Getting married in her mid 20s, 2 children by the age of 30. It wasn't a bad life, but it certainly wasn't the one she imagined for herself.

She looked at her black stilettos buried beneath piles of clothes in her closet. Opened once but never worn because there was never an occasion, or they didn't match any of her outfits, or some other excuse. She pictured herself five years into the future after she had made the necessary changes in her life to become who she wanted to be. In her vision, she was wearing those black stilettos hailing a taxi on Toronto's Bay Street on her way to work as a lawyer. She worked for one of the non-profit organizations helping youth who didn't know their place in the world, something Carter understood well. Despite being overworked and exhausted her hair was never out of place, her makeup emphasizing her long lashes and blue eyes, her lipstick outlining her upturned mouth.

A car horn beeped outside her window and Carter was pulled back to reality. She tucked her hair behind her ear and pulled on her boots and glided down the stairs to the open passenger side door of her dad's pickup truck. The radio was on and Journey's "Don't stop believing" was playing. Her dad was humming along and tapping his steering wheel, and Carter wondered if he would be this happy if he knew the truth. "What's wrong kiddo, don't like the 80s? Well that's a shame they were some of the best years of my life." He laughed, his roaring laugh billowing through the car, a laugh that envelops you like a warm hug. She hadn't heard that laugh, not since her mom passed away five years ago. Everyone had always said Carter looked just like her mother, but Carter couldn't place what they all were seeing. Where her mother was delicate Carter was coarse, her mother's ivory skin contrasting Carter's tan stubble, her mother's voice like a song and Carter's escaped her throat deep and booming.

The cool breeze blew in through the window tickling Carter's neck where her hair cropped off sending shivers down her spine. Winter hadn't been particularly cold, but December had been long. In fact, the entire year had been long. A year full of big decisions: was Carter going to college? What major? Trades like her dad? Which university? Despite all the decisions marking the end of her high school career the big decision was marked on the calendar: March 31st. The day of her last psychiatrist appointment where she would bring in her father and tell him what had been weighing on Carter's chest for as long as she could remember. Only one person knew the truth. And that person was bound by an oath to protect Carter's confidentiality. The car pulled up to the school and Carter grabbed the handle of the door. Carter's father tugged on her baseball cap and said, "Have a great day son, knock em dead." Carter stepped out of the car and decided she was going to tell her dad tonight, and exhaled realizing that maybe this was the last

time she would hear it, “son.” Only one person knew the truth, the truth that Carter was a transgender teenager. But that would change tonight because her father would meet the real Carter and she was ready to embrace her true self and begin the challenging, but beautiful journey of the rest of her life.