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Women Mostly Made of Water

Jessie Fales

Leading up to her tenth birthday, Ana hinted heavily to her mother that every tomboy must have a pair of pink high-top sneakers and a pair of jean overalls. “And Mom, I’m a tomboy,” she said, “so I need them.”

Ana’s grandmother scolded her, “You cannot let your daughter run around looking like a boy. Girls ought to be wearing dresses, or people will be getting the wrong idea.”

Whatever idea people were supposed to get from looking at Ana, her grandmother never directly said.

Years earlier, Ana’s friend locked her in his bedroom by placing a bookcase in front of his door so he could look at her naked body.

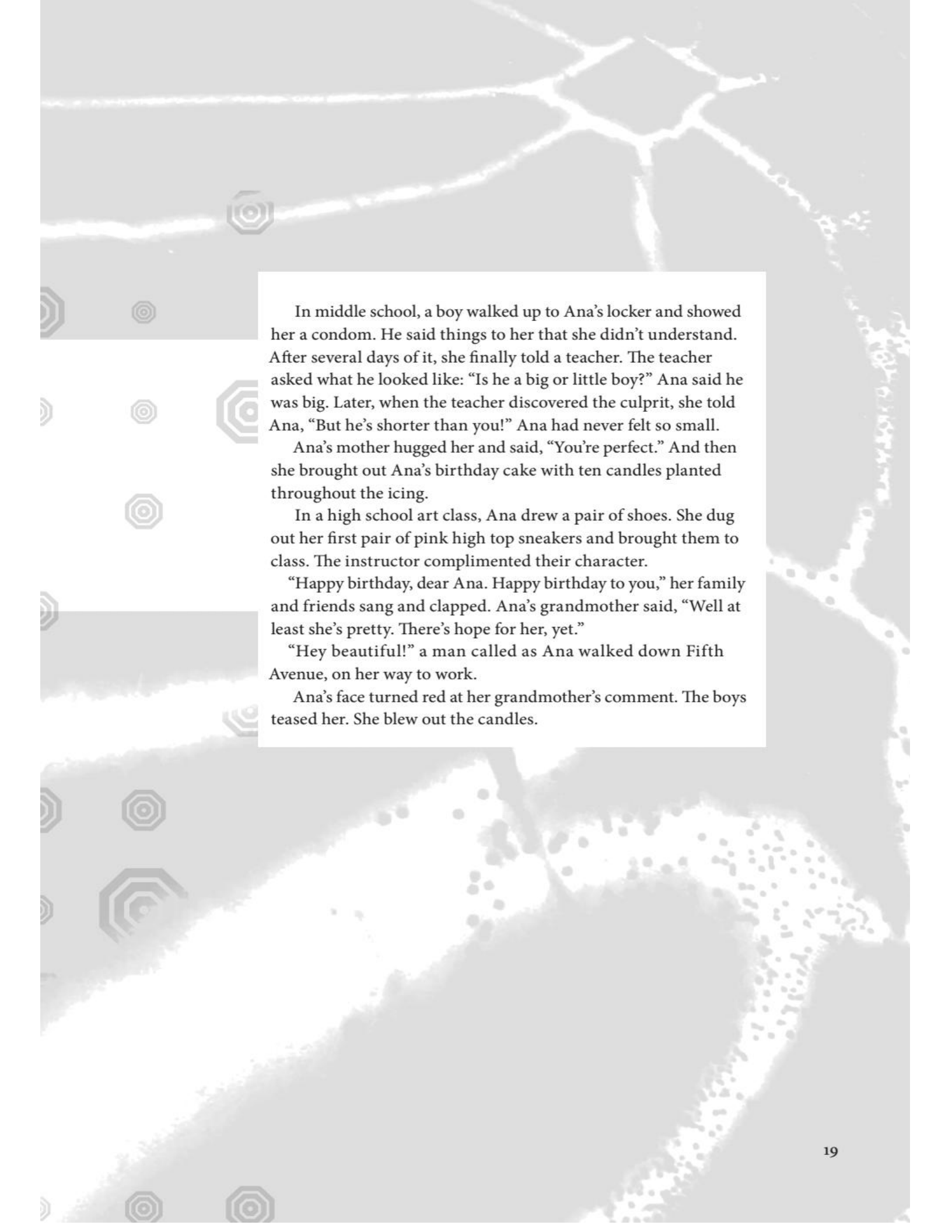
Years later, the same friend was sent to prison for felony sexual misconduct—he raped his girlfriend in a college dorm room.

On her tenth birthday, Ana opened her mother’s gift and found exactly what she’d asked for. That rarely ever happened.

When Ana was sixteen, her cousin texted her his nudes. She told him to stop, and he called her a prude.

Years later, the same cousin brought his fiancé to meet the family over Christmas. During a lively family dinner, he argued that racism and sexism didn’t exist because he was raped by a black woman. Ana’s grandmother was napping at the time.

“Everything is perfect,” Ana told her mother on her tenth birthday. She tied the laces of her pink high top sneakers, and rolled up the bottoms of her jean overalls. “I feel like I can do anything.”



In middle school, a boy walked up to Ana's locker and showed her a condom. He said things to her that she didn't understand. After several days of it, she finally told a teacher. The teacher asked what he looked like: "Is he a big or little boy?" Ana said he was big. Later, when the teacher discovered the culprit, she told Ana, "But he's shorter than you!" Ana had never felt so small.

Ana's mother hugged her and said, "You're perfect." And then she brought out Ana's birthday cake with ten candles planted throughout the icing.

In a high school art class, Ana drew a pair of shoes. She dug out her first pair of pink high top sneakers and brought them to class. The instructor complimented their character.

"Happy birthday, dear Ana. Happy birthday to you," her family and friends sang and clapped. Ana's grandmother said, "Well at least she's pretty. There's hope for her, yet."

"Hey beautiful!" a man called as Ana walked down Fifth Avenue, on her way to work.

Ana's face turned red at her grandmother's comment. The boys teased her. She blew out the candles.