

# MAEVE RISING

An exclusive excerpt

*COMING OUT TRANS*

*IN CORPORATE AMERICA*

MAEVE DUVALLY

# AWAKENING

2018

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## THE VOICE CAME OUT OF NOWHERE.

It was a brisk, late October day and I was sitting in front of my computer in my cramped, unexceptional office on the 29th floor of 200 West Street, Goldman Sachs' headquarters in lower Manhattan.

As I shoveled down my overpriced Goldman cafeteria lunch of wilted lettuce leaves, pasta salad and tasteless tomatoes in my office, a bewildering thought overtook me.

*I want to wear makeup tonight.*

Scheduled to attend a fund-raising gala at the Marriot Marquis hotel in the heart of Times Square, I had been dreading tripping over the gauntlet of tourists gawking at the tall buildings, not to mention the rude Sesame Street characters trying to make a quick buck. My livelihood depended on my relationships with the top financial journalists in New York at *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Bloomberg*, all of whom would be there.

I locked my computer, put on my suit jacket, and headed out of the office. Impetuosity was not in my blood. Caution and deliberation were my watchwords. There was no choice being made. I simply stood up, rushed out of the office, and began to walk.

I knew my destination: Sephora. I had never been inside one before though I had purchased gift certificates online for my daughter.

Goldman Sachs is all the way downtown, right next to the former World Financial Center, where I had worked in two of my previous jobs. The center point of the building complex, now called Brookfield Place, is the Winter Garden, a vast European marbled space punctuated by towering, live palm trees. Built in the 1970s, it usually looked a little bit long in the tooth but today, the palm trees stood proudly, thriving though indoors, and the din that echoed through the confines was redolent with the happiness of its occupants.

Children were joyfully squawking as their nannies, mostly from the Caribbean, chatted noisily with other nannies. Strangely, the world was more in focus, and when I looked closer, it was brighter and lighter than I normally saw it.

Hurrying through, I descended a long escalator, entering the recently built Oculus, a giant, white-ribbed sea creature inhaling and exhaling yet more luxury stores.

Sunlight gushed through the windows on the side and at the top of the structure, which was located on the site of the fallen twin towers. Everything was brilliant white—the marble floor, the bones of the Oculus running up the side and the observation deck. I often walked through on the way to the subway, but it had never been so dazzling.

*Had something changed in me?*

Lingering in front of the entrance of Sephora, I was awed by the beautiful colors and smells, and suddenly wondered if

women knew that, compared to the lives of men, theirs is a world of sensory overload.

*Now what do I do?*

Finally stepping across the threshold, I was suddenly petrified, but dared not ask anybody for help lest they think the makeup was for me. I locked eyes with one of the young ladies dressed in black who was serving other customers and quickly averted her gaze.

Once I turned my attention to the store's selection, time and the other people didn't seem to exist. It was just me surrounded by makeup. So many different products were calling me to pick them up.

The eye shadow and lipstick were easy, but I was at a loss for the rest. I selected a pink powder I believed to be foundation and a little round mirror in a pink metal case.

Again and again, my hand stretched to pick up something but once I grasped it, it did not feel right, so I put it back. Finally, I had what I thought I needed. At the register, an attractive young black girl with broad orange eye shadow, asked, "Do you have a Sephora frequent shopper's card?"

"Of course not," I wanted to say but simply shook my head and handed over my credit card. When I walked out of the store, I felt exultant.

Skipping back to the office, I noticed I was clutching the black-and-white-striped Sephora shopping bag, which could give me away when I walked back into the Goldman office. I stuffed it under my coat and held my arm against the precious items until I could safely tuck them somewhere in my office, where nobody could see them.

I somehow knew the makeup would make me feel special, but I did not want anybody to know. I applied my makeup so lightly it would barely register in the subconscious of people I met that evening.

And this is what I believed I was doing in the drab gray men's room on the 29th floor as my day ended and I prepared to go to the dinner. I was in a stall looking at the little round mirror. My trove included blue eye shadow, mascara which I smeared on my nose by accident, and the foundation which turned out to be blush.

Sitting on the toilet, I daubed the makeup with one hand and held the small pink mirror with the other. I didn't dare do it in front of the big mirror over the sink. I even paused my task in the stall whenever somebody entered, afraid a sound would escape from me, announcing to all what I was furtively doing.

I had splurged on lipstick, which I applied last. It was Dior—bright red, in a gorgeous black, rectangular case. Savoring every moment, I applied a thick coating of red luxury and wondered how I could have spent my life thus far with naked lips.

I was pleased with how I looked. The fact that I could look at myself in the mirror for more than 15 seconds was miraculous in and of itself. What I saw wasn't perfect, but I liked it just fine.



## **Maeve Rising: Coming Out Trans in Corporate America**

**By Maeve DuVally**

She felt unconnected and full of self-loathing. Not herself. It took a lifetime in and out of AA and rehab and a trail of failed relationships and escalating trouble, before she began to understand the source of her lifelong despair and took the bold step to become the woman she is now. In this intimate and unflinchingly honest memoir, Maeve tells the story of being herself in all aspects of her life, including work, the last threshold.

She faced the special challenge of working as a manager of public relations for Goldman Sachs and therefore was a public face of the company. She knew she couldn't transition quietly. Initially she keeps her identity a secret with wardrobe changes in the lobby bathroom after work. When she finally declares herself, Goldman Sachs – to her surprise – embraces her. A New York Times story follows, leading Maeve to a new life as a role model for other transgender people and giving her a sense of purpose that had been lacking her entire life.

### **MEMOIR**

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