

Sweet 16

KATE BRIAN

SIMON PULSE

New York London Toronto Sydney

**Interview with Teagan Phillips re:
Upcoming Sweet Sixteen Party
Transcript 1**

Reporter: Melissa Bradshaw, Senior Editor,
Rosewood Prep Sentinel

MB: This is Melissa Bradshaw, reporting for the Rosewood Prep Sentinel. I'm here with Teagan Phillips, sophomore, who is going to chat with us about what may be one of the most anticipated parties of the year, her upcoming sweet sixteen. So, Teagan, tell me, why should the Sentinel run a story about your sweet sixteen?

TP: *(pause)* You want me to *convince* you?

MB: Well, Rosewood Prep is an exclusive school, as you well know. We have at least three huge blowouts a month. What makes yours so special? Why should we feature it instead of, say, Donnie Darko's graduation party?

TP: *(clears her throat)* Well, *Missy*, first of all, Donald Moskowitz renamed himself after a cult film character who talks to psychotic murderous bunnies that hang out in his bedroom. So let's just say that his little fete is likely to include a massive murder-suicide plot, while mine is going to be the most exclusive, the most fabulous, the most intense

party this school has ever seen. Which would you rather attend, Missy?

MB: It's Melissa, actually. So, let me get this straight, you're claiming that your party is going to be better than, say, Chad Reilly's all-senior weekend in the Bahamas?

TP: Please. People talked about that cheese-a-palooza for what? A month? They're going to be talking about this one for years.

MB: Interesting . . . interesting. So you've been working on this party for how long?

TP: Over twelve months.

MB: And how many other sweet sixteens have you attended in that time?

TP: Oh, at least fifteen.

MB: And have you been taking notes?

TP: (*scoffs*) Hardly. Unless you count the mile-long list of things *not* to do. My sweet sixteen is going to blow those lame fests out of the water.

MB: So am I to understand that all this work you've done on this little soiree is motivated by sheer competitive drive?

TP: You bet your [edited for content] it is.

Chapter 1

“Mrs. Natsui!”

Teagan Phillips was thirty seconds into her day and already she was seriously pissed off. She sat up straight in her four-poster bed, her silk rose-colored Calvin Klein nightgown twisted around her size-six body like a straitjacket, and shouted at the top of her lungs.

“Mrs. Natsui! Get your ass in here!”

Teagan jabbed at the buttons on her remote control, flipping the channels on her plasma-screen TV until it finally landed on the Weather Channel. A snarky-looking guy with a clipped white mustache grinned back at her from behind his state-of-the-art weather desk.

“And it’s a washout for the greater Philadelphia area today,” he said as the screen snapped to live shots of the Liberty Bell, the steps outside the art museum, and the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Windshield wipers whipped furiously and raindrops pelted the camera lenses. “We’re looking at

record rainfall and possibly some thunderstorms rolling in late today, lasting straight through the night. If you live anywhere in eastern Pennsylvania or southern New Jersey, you're gonna want to break out your golf umbrellas and galoshes, people. It's gonna be a wet one!"

Teagan groaned and hit the power button. Slumping over her bunched-up hand-knit cashmere blanket, she stared across her cavernous bedroom to the bay window that overlooked the gardens and pool in the backyard. The sky was so dark it could have been nine at night instead of nine o'clock in the morning. The rain battered the perennials in her window boxes, beating them down. It should have been a beautiful, sunny spring day. The birds should have been chirping. The windows should have been open and a light breeze should have been tickling the gold chiffon curtains that fluttered around her bed. It should have been perfect. It was *supposed* to be perfect.

Teagan sucked in as much air as her lungs would hold and raised her voice to the rafters. "Mrs.! Nat! Su! Iiiiiii!!!"

"Good morning, Miss Teagan!" Mrs. Natsui trilled as she padded into the room in her stiff black uniform and black sneakers. There was some sort of yellow stain on her white apron. Her graying hair was clipped back at the nape of her neck and she wore her humongous, red-rimmed glasses attached to her neck by a gold chain. She clutched a huge bouquet of colorful balloons in both hands and had an incredibly wide smile on. "Happy birthday!"

"Yeah, right," Teagan said, whipping the eight-hundred-thread-count Egyptian cotton sheets aside and stuffing her feet into her new sheepskin Coach slippers. "Why the hell didn't you tell me it was going to rain today?"

She trudged over to the window, yanking at her twisted nightie, and shoved aside the wispy curtain. Outside, the lush green grass was dotted with thick, muddy puddles as far as the eye could see. Budding trees bent under the force of the wind. The pelting rain made pockmarks in the sparkling pool water, which was peppered with white petals ripped from a nearby dogwood. All the lounge chairs had been removed and stashed inside the storage area of the pool house, which meant that at the very least the landscaping staff had known about the downpour ahead of time. Somebody should have warned her. Wasn't it kind of their job?

"I'm sorry, Miss Teagan," Mrs. Natsui said. "But what does the weather matter on such a special day? Your sweet sixteen!"

Try soaked sixteen, Teagan thought, just imaging the stupid puns her friends were going to make. This was unbelievable. Today was supposed to be the biggest day of her life. She had been looking forward to it *forever*. Today was the day she was supposed to have the party to end all sweet sixteen parties. The party that was going to totally kick the butt of Shari Marx's lame aloha-themed debacle with its pork kabobs and tacky plastic leis. She had spent weeks planning the event all the way down to the very last detail, spending her father's money like it was tap water in order to make sure everything was perfect. Over two hundred people had RSVP'd, the very *crème de la crème* of suburban Philadelphia society. Today was the day Teagan Phillips was going to prove to the world that she was the most stylish, wealthy, doted-upon girl in Upper Sheridan, Pennsylvania.

Or at least the one who knew how and where to spend the most cash.

But how was she supposed to have an elegant cocktail

hour on the slate patio of the country club if the patio in question was submerged in water?

“Look! Look what that fancy school of yours has sent for you!”

Mrs. Natsui brought the balloon bouquet over to the window. Teagan tore the card from the ribbons and scanned it quickly.

Happy sweet sixteen to one of our top students! Best wishes, the faculty and staff of Rosewood Prep.

Teagan looked up at the balloons. They really were kind of pretty. When she was little, balloons had been her favorite part of any birthday party. Her mother had always ordered so many helium balloons they crowded out the ceiling. Super-long ribbons were attached to each one, long enough for the kids to grab at and twirl around their fingers. Teagan had loved the way the ribbons curled down and tickled her cheeks wherever she walked.

A squishy lump of sorrow formed in Teagan’s chest and she scoffed, letting the balloons go until they bounced up to her cathedral ceiling and got entangled in the whirring ceiling fan.

“They’re just fishing for another donation,” she said, turning her attention back to the deluge outside.

“Oh!” Mrs. Natsui exclaimed, rushing for the switch on the wall to turn off the fan. It made an ominous-sounding squeal and finally sputtered and died. A couple of balloons popped, sandwiched between the fan blades and the stucco ceiling.

“God! Are you *trying* to give me a heart attack?” Teagan asked, flattening her hand against her chest.

“Of course not, Miss Teagan,” Mrs. Natsui said.

Teagan rolled her eyes, then glared at the clouds outside. She pulled her thick brown hair over her shoulder and examined it. Yep. Just as she suspected. It was already pulling a Chia pet. Why couldn't her father have settled in LA or Arizona? Someplace arid and far, far away from this nightmare humidity.

Michel better be on top of his game today, she thought, already picturing her stylist's horrified face when he got a look at her 'fro. He would just have to earn his tip, that was all. There was no way Teagan was showing up at her sweet sixteen looking like a Muppet.

"I will send David up to deal with that," Mrs. Natsui said, gesturing to the ceiling.

"Think we could refrain from calling in the staff peeping Tom until *after* I'm dressed?" Teagan asked.

Mrs. Natsui sighed but got to work making Teagan's bed without another word. Teagan slumped onto the window seat, pressing her forehead against the clear glass, absently picking at her fingernails. She knew she should hit the shower already and get on with her day, but all she felt like doing at that moment was crawling back into bed. What had she done to deserve this? Did the universe really hate her this much?

Her stomach grumbled and Teagan put her hand over it. Not that Natsui would ever notice or that Teagan cared a smidge what the woman thought of her. Teagan just detested bodily functions of any kind and hated being reminded that she even had a stomach. Especially after last night's peanut M&M fest.

She had known when she tore into that party-size bag that karma would find a way of getting back at her. But what was she supposed to do? It was the night before her birthday, she

was all alone, her boyfriend, Max Modell, hadn't even bothered to call her before going on his underage bar crawl in Philly, and, as always was the case the night before her birthday, she couldn't stop thinking about her mom. Teagan had responded to all this adversity in the only way she knew how. She had turned on the *Newlyweds: Nick and Jessica* rerun marathon and downed the whole bag of chocolate before Nick had even once rolled his eyes behind Jessica's back.

Eating the M&M's made her feel less anxious. But digesting them was another story. Digesting them made her feel like a fat pig. How many calories were in an entire bag of peanut M&M's? She could already feel her hips expanding.

But wasn't that punishment enough? Didn't she get any sympathy points from whoever was in charge of karma for being a half orphan? Did they really have to hit her with a monsoon? It was just so unfair.

"You should get dressed, Miss Teagan," Mrs. Natsui said, expertly placing one of a half dozen silk-and-ribbon throw pillows on Teagan's bed. "Miss Karen is downstairs waiting for you."

Teagan blew out an exasperated sigh and rolled her eyes. A perfect start to a perfect day.

"What does *she* want?" Teagan asked, heading for her walk-in closet, her slippers sinking into the plush carpet.

"She wants to wish you a happy birthday, Miss Teagan," Mrs. Natsui replied.

Alone in the walk-in, which was more the size of a small bedroom, Teagan mouthed Mrs. Natsui's words, making an irritated face. "*She wants to wish you a happy birthday, Miss Teagan.*" Wasn't it against the rules for the help to condescend to her? She shoved aside one designer dress after another, looking for something to wear to the salon.

Why does Karen insist on trying to bond with me? she thought, irritated. You've got the rock on your finger! Congratulations! You don't have to pretend to like me anymore!

Finally Teagan grabbed a cashmere V-neck sweater by Nicole Miller—black to match her mood—and her favorite Seven jeans—the ones that downplayed her butt and made her look super-skinny. She opened one of her dozen lingerie drawers and took out a set of lacy black La Perla underwear. Expensive, sophisticated lingerie always made her feel more elegant and sure of herself. At this point, she could use all the help she could get. Before she walked out of the closet, she slid her fingers down the silk paisley Gucci scarf that hung on a hook next to the door—an old ritual.

On her way to her private bathroom, Teagan grabbed her pink cell phone from her vanity table and turned it on. Immediately the phone beeped, indicating she had a message. Teagan dropped her clothes on the velvet-covered bench inside her bathroom and hit the message button.

She smiled for the first time all day when she heard Max's voice.

"Hey, Sweet Bottom! Just calling to say good night! Miss you already," Max said as his friends cackled and hooted in the background. The smile faded when she realized he was totally trashed and way beyond confused. Somewhere nearby a siren wailed. He lowered his voice. "I love you."

Teagan shook her head and smirked. He must have called last night after she turned her phone off, somewhere in the middle of his bar crawl. Max and his friends prided themselves on knowing all the bars in Philly that didn't card. They went on these road trips once every month, crashing at Trey Duncan's brother's dorm suite at Temple to sleep it off. Max

must have been seriously sloshed if he had called her after 11 P.M.—her absolute latest bedtime if she wanted to get her proper beauty sleep. Plus he had called her “Sweet Bottom,” which was so not her nickname. Max knew she hated anything that called attention to what she considered her massive posterior.

But she could forgive him since he said he loved her. He barely ever said that. And never in front of his friends.

Teagan dropped the phone and turned on the water in her marble shower full blast. She would have loved to have taken a soak in the Jacuzzi instead, with its ten high-powered jets and her new Philosophy Pina Colada bath bubbles, but there just wasn't time. She was going to need to get to the salon early if Michel was going to have time to work his magic. She looked in the mirror and grimaced. From the look of things, she should have been there an hour ago.

This book is a work of fiction. Any references to historical events, real people, or real locales are used fictitiously. Other names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.



Produced by Alloy Entertainment
151 West 26th Street, New York, NY 10001



SIMON PULSE

An imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division
1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

Copyright © 2006 by Alloy Entertainment

All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form.

SIMON PULSE and colophon are registered trademarks of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Also available in a Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers hardcover edition.

Designed by Joel Tippie

The text of this book was set in New Baskerville.

Manufactured in the United States of America

First Simon Pulse edition December 2007

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

The Library of Congress has cataloged the hardcover edition as follows:

Brian, Kate, 1974—

Sweet 16 / Kate Brian.—1st ed.

p. cm.

Summary: On the night of her sweet sixteen birthday party, self-centered snob Teagan Phillips receives a visit from a special person who tries to convince the teenager to change the way she lives her life.

ISBN-13: 978-1-4169-0032-0 (hc)

ISBN-10: 1-4169-0032-2 (hc)

[1. Self-perception—Fiction. 2. Conduct of life—Fiction. 3. Birthdays—Fiction.

4. Parties—Fiction.] I. Title: Sweet sixteen. II. Title.

PZ7.B75875Swe 2006

[Fic]—dc22

2005020550

ISBN-13: 978-1-4169-0033-7 (pbk)

ISBN-10: 1-4169-0033-0 (pbk)