Quoth the Raven

In 1996, 6-year-old Raven Lopez became our first cover (little) girl. A decade later, she's well on her way to becoming a woman.

September 1, 2005 By David Thorpe

Raven Lopez
15, New York City student

You're about to start tenth grade. How was ninth? It was your first year of high school. It was good, even though the tests were kind of hard. Math is my worst subject—but I still pass it.

What's your favorite subject? English. I get to read. My favorite book right now is *The G Spot.*

Wow! Is that a book for kids? Actually, I don't think so.

Your mom told me you met a boyfriend. Did you tell him you have HIV? It was weird. On New Year's Eve, we were chilling at my house, and I said, "I have to tell you something." He said, "What?" And I told him,"Remember what I told you before that my mother had?" We used condoms,but he got kinda mad because he thought he had it. My mother broke it down for him, like, "Listen, you used condoms, and my daughter's viral load is low." [Afterward] he was like, "Raven, I still love you." But we're broken up now.

Have you told other boys? Yes. Some- times boys will be like, "Oh, Raven, you're lying—you just don't want to do anything." And I'll be like, "No, I'm serious. Why do you think I'm lying?" A lot of boys are like, "Oh, she's got the monster—I'm not messing with her." It doesn't bother me. There are educated boys out there who know about how you get this disease.

Are you still doing HIV education? Once in a while. I did a speech at the New York State House for World AIDS Day. But sometimes I'm not really up to it—you've gotta catch me in the mood. I get tired of it.

Are you still in touch with your friend Hydeia Broadbent [another prominent young African-American woman with HIV]? We've lost touch. When I was a little girl, I used to look up to her,like, "Oh, yeah, that's my role model." But not anymore. I want to be like myself.

Do you ever feel jealous of your friends who don't have HIV? I used to because they never

had to take medicine every day like me. But not anymore. I feel like a normal kid; the only thing is that I've got the virus.

What regimen are you on now? Emtriva, Sustiva and Zerit. It's two pills in the morning and two at night. It's easy to keep track of, but I get so tired of taking medicine sometimes. I slack off, and my doctor gets mad. I understand why. I really like him—he's known me since I was a baby.

Are there side effects that bother you? No. I just sleep a lot. That's all.

Well, that's normal for a teenager! So what do you like to do with your friends? Go outside, go to parties.

Your mom told me you like to shop. Oh, I surely do. I love buying new clothes, getting new sneakers. My favorite labels are Seven, Guess, Ralph Lauren. And shoes, oh, forget about it. I like Guccis, Pradas, everything. I have a pair of Guccis, but I don't have a pair of Pradas yet.

You have expensive taste, Raven. I do.

So what are you most looking forward to about school this year? Trying to get out and go to college. I want to go to Harvard and be a lawyer.

Check out Raven's 1996 POZ debut*!*

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