

“You really don’t mind answering all these questions?” Elizabeth questioned while sorting through a rack of Prom dresses.

“Not at all,” Carly answered. “Ask all you want.”

“Well, where did HIV come from? I heard that humans got it through monkeys? That can’t be true.” Elizabeth laughed.

“Actually, that is the most common theory. Monkeys have a common virus called SIV and this was transmitted to humans. We don’t know exactly how humans contracted the virus from the monkeys, but there are stories about someone cutting monkey-meat and their hand at the same time, which would facilitate the transfer.”

Elizabeth held a glittery, fuchsia dress up to her body and admired herself in the three-way mirror. At first, Carly thought she wasn’t paying attention, but Elizabeth finally spoke.

“That just seems so weird, getting a virus from an animal!”

“It’s not that weird,” Jade called over from another rack of brightly colored dresses. “Just look at the bird flu that’s going around.”

Carly nodded in agreement.

“I’ve heard that are some other theories about the origin,” Jade walked closer to her friends.

“There are,” Carly said. “There is a book that states HIV was transmitted via the polio vaccinations in the Congo. Some people believe that HIV was intentionally created to kill other people and some even believe that the virus was sent by aliens. These are not supported by research, though.”

“Does it even matter?” Elizabeth asked. In her opinion, it didn’t make a difference where it came from.

“It does, but we have other issues that we need to focus on. The virus is here and forty million people have it. Twenty-five million have already died. We need to focus on prevention of new infections, treatment and care. Even if we found the origin of the virus tomorrow, it would not change the fact that people are still being infected with the virus every day.”

“I just can’t believe how fast it’s grown,” Jade said. “It’s only been around for the last twenty years, right?”

Carly delicately fingered the beading on a turquoise halter dress.

“You’re half right,” she explained. “It was first tested in the USA in the 1980’s, but it existed way before this test. The first positive blood sample was found in Africa in the late 1950’s. It is believed that HIV entered the human population around the 1930’s or 1940’s.”

“You amaze me!” Elizabeth exclaimed. “Seriously, you are so well informed about HIV. You know everything!”

Carly laughed, putting the turquoise dress back on the rack.

“I wouldn’t go as far as to say that, but I do know a lot about AIDS. When I was first diagnosed with the disease, instead of feeling sorry for myself, I decided to research it as much as possible and spread an educated word about the disease. The more people that know, the better off the human race is.”

“Agreed,” Elizabeth said. “I’m really glad that we went out today. Thank you so much for answering all of my questions.”

“No problem,” Carly replied. “That’s what I’m here for.”