



“ I was empowered when I finished school, despite the odds not being in my favor. I threw myself into making myself the best I could be. I found the love in myself, the beauty, and for all the beatings and cruel days I had overcome, and I discovered my strength.” Ruby Rose doesn’t fit any conventional mold. What was cause for merciless bullying as a child would become the *raison-d’etre* for her global fame. An already accomplished model and TV host, the twenty-nine-year-old Aussie steamed her way into a global phenomenon when she was cast as inmate Stella Carlin in Netflix’s *Orange is the New Black*, which premiered in June of 2015. Rose had long set her eyes on the role. “It was very surreal. I had prayed and meditated on it and hoped so much to get the role but it wasn’t until I was on set it really hit me that my dream had come true.” By the time the show launched, the term “Ruby Rose-sexual” had already been coined for straight women who have a crush on the gender-fluid actor.

Comfortable in the language of gender pronouns, Rose explored her experience with gender fluidity in her short film “Break Free,” in which she transforms from a feminine woman into a tattooed man. “It’s autobiographical. It’s literally a five minute video to explain what gender fluid means to me and why I have chosen the route to look the way I look versus what many have often commented is how I should look and how pretty I ‘could be.’” So far the film has gathered nearly four million YouTube views. Beyond its narrative, the short film is a visual delight and spot-on explanation of what the term “gender fluid” means, not just to Rose, but to those in the dark. “It means I’m never really here nor there on the binary gender scale. I’m not a woman; I’m not a man. I’m sort of just a being who floats in and out of female days and male days. I like to think of it as taking the best parts of the two traditional sexes and forming one.”

Rose came out as gay at the age of twelve. As a result she was abused horrifically both emotionally and physically during her youth, one incident requiring a hospital stay. The child of a single mother, her family moved around a lot before settling in Melbourne. “I had a young mum, and a very determined one at that. We moved around a lot ‘til she found a good university to go to in a small town called Churchill. We stayed there a while then moved to Melbourne and lived in a church parish. I sung in the choir.” In high school, to escape the persistent bullying she was subjected to, she was sent to Germany as part of an exchange program. “I loved the time I lived in Germany. I wasn’t actually very good at German, but they chose the top three best students. So I guess that means they chose the top two students and me. They wanted to get me away from the school for a while, while I was being bullied.”

Attending a Pink concert would trigger a series of events that would see her transition from choir girl to model when she was scouted for the Girlfriend Model Search, a competition she’d place second in. “I was at a Pink concert, I was about fifteen, and someone picked me out of the crowd to enter the competition. I was so not down to do it, but eventually my friends were over my non-willingness to get into modeling or even take the offer as a huge compliment, and walked me right up to the desk to fill out the entry form.” She obviously has