

God is a woman. Must be. Gots to be. *Has* to be a woman. And her name? Well her name is Ms. Diana Ross. Not the garish millennium Ross – no, not her. Not the bubblegum sixties Ross – couldn't be. God is the Diana Ross from the seventies. And the holy trinity is *Mahogany*, *Lady Sings the Blues*, and *The Wiz*.

Shawn always got these revelations while watching “The Miss Thing-Thing” as he liked to call her. Right now he was curled up in the basement in the ancient blue reclining wingback chair, sipping grape store-brand soda, and eating cheese puffs. It was Sunday night -- business as usual. Shawn had played piano in church and for the women’s chorus as they sang at his pastor’s brother’s church in Dekalb, Mississippi. Now he was watching his favorite of the “Ross Trinity” (*Mahogany*) while his good shirts were washing. It was at the part where Anthony Hopkins is unable to “get it up”.

“Sissy,” Shawn whispered and then giggled.

Everything was perfect. He didn't feel the least bit different. At least not like everyone said you would feel after you had graduated. Truthfully, things felt exactly as they had two nights ago as he'd walked across the stage and accepted his diploma. That night, Grandma took him out to dinner at Morrison's Cafeteria, and afterwards his uncle Bobby had slipped him fifty dollars and told him to “go get him some.” Then, he got in his champagne colored '81 Caprice, picked up Darryl and Tevon, and went to The Beach – the name Meridian's gay men had given to the conference room at a closed down hotel out on highway 45. The white man that owned the building opened this room once every weekend to become the only gay bar for two hundred miles. They'd danced till five am. Then they'd gotten breakfast at The Waffle House (Tevon's treat) and went home. It had taken him all of Saturday to recover. He was already hung over when he'd stumbled in at 7 am, and his uncle Bobby had cajoled him about smelling like