

The Futile Fashionista Dress For Suckcess



I have the perfect wardrobe for all the jobs I am qualified for: showgirl, bon vivant, children's clown, Bobbie Gentry impersonator, dilettante, fully dressed and slightly uncoordinated go-go dancer, murder victim reenactment star on Forensic Files, daydreamer, and hostess of cocktails atop a rotating lounge in a futuristic city.

What I don't own is a proper interview suit. I know I have gone to various Wal-Marts throughout my life and purchased brown skirts, brown jackets, brown shoes, and brown purses. I have shown up at interviews, demure and turd-like to respond sensibly to questions. "Yes, as a matter of fact it is my life's ambition to copy documents, staple them, and finally file them for your fascinating company." However, a week after being hired, something spangled must bust forth.

In the basement of a major bank (please don't find me), incorrectly processing mortgage loan refunds, I bunkered in a cubicle wearing my Salvation Army dung-hued professional jacket embellished with two huge sweat rings under each arm. I perspired in the carpeted cave fearing that someone would discover an imposter in their midst. I knew nothing of math, mortgages, or banking-related responsibilities. Whenever a supervisor gave me the evil eye, I reached frantically for the embossing seal. As long as I was embossing an important piece of paper, I looked sensible. Swathed in brown, I disappeared like dirt.

Since those days, I have attained jobs of leadership and respectability. I send Brownie in for the interview, but the real me shows up for the first day of work in a splash of fuchsia and fringe, ready to take charge. I've discovered when one is organized, sharp, and persistent, the shell ceases to matter. Bad news coming from someone in mismatched plaids and platforms is much more palatable.

“Hey guys, it looks like the suits upstairs have added an unpaid half hour to the work day and they’re taking out the soda machines...but, you know, they can’t stop you from injecting vodka into your oranges and one bite down on the cyanide capsule you keep between your teeth and this is all over!”

Each time I move, a sequined majorette’s uniform with a giant eagle on the chest has moved with me, but where are the brown suits? Were they shoved into a garbage bag with dead dreams and deposited at St. Vincent de Paul? Did they spontaneously combust under the pressure of deception when the wearer assured an interviewer that she was a “people person”?

Perhaps at this very minute, some hopeful interviewee is spritzing pit stains with Febreze to eradicate the stench of anxiety and take the brown suit to new heights. While I sit typing away, pieces of my brown suit might have been cut into squares for a mundane quilt or strings from frayed sleeves woven into the nest of a meadowlark. These are the things I consider when I should be collating.

I am impressed with people who have two distinct closets: work clothes and play clothes. They have created dual worlds, alternating between standardized executive wear and funky weekend freakery. It seems crafty and compartmentalized, the way politicians and serial killers are able to halve their lives for the sake of ambitions, be they corporate or corporal.

Sometimes a professional suit feels like a disguise. When I wear it, I am acknowledging that an organization has certain rules and regulations, but I also feel like a spy in the house of business. When my personal style emerges, it is less the evolution of a scam and more a nod to a realistic future for the company. I’m saying, “Now that we’ve dispensed with the formalities, let’s get innovative; let’s make life a little more interesting.” I am also saying that it’s laundry day.

TRIED: I tried out one of those drugstore micro-dermabrasion kits designed to smooth skin and slough off ten years of aging. For two days I resembled a burn victim. A week later I looked like I suffered from rosacea and a month after that it just appeared as if I was blushing. For about forty-five minutes to an hour I glowed with the radiant skin of childhood and my cheeks resembled the roses so many poets write of. Then, fifteen minutes after that, the natural progression of time resumed and I was once again haggard.

TRUE: The world’s best lip stain is a strawberry flavored Otter Pop. Unlike top-dollar lipstick and fancy glosses, the dye deposited by this popsicle lasts for days. You can eat a greasy dinner of fried chicken and onion rings, make out with the muscle-car guy in the parking lot of the Taco Bell, and still emerge ruby-lipped for your Monday morning algebra class. This beauty tip is approved by high school sluts nation wide.

TIRED: Distressed denim with fake bleach stains and faux filth dyed into the fabric is sort of insulting to miners. Sure it’s fun to romp around in dirty jeans chemically worn at the factory, but some Americans have to wear their jeans out the old-fashioned way,

grubbing for coal underground praying that shaft doesn't collapse and the canary doesn't die. If you work in the dot-com industry and don't have to wear a funny hard hat with a lamp attached, perhaps a clean pair of Levis would be a more accurate representation of your status in life.

TRENDY: A well-worded sincere apology can clear up the worst complexion.