

Tales from the Back Row: An Outsider's View from Inside the Fashion Industry

By Amy Odell

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The Lowdown on High Fashion

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In *Tales from the Back Row*, Amy—funny and fearless—takes readers behind the stage of New York's hottest fashion shows to meet the world's most influential models, designers, celebrities, editors, and photographers. But first, she has to push her way through the crowds outside, where we see the lengths people go to be noticed by the lurking paparazzi, and weave her way through the packed venue, from the very back row to the front. And as Amy climbs the ladder (with tips about how you can, too), she introduces an industry powered by larger-than-life characters: she meets the intimidating Anna Wintour and the surprisingly gracious Rachel Zoe, not to mention the hilarious Chelsea Handler, and more. As she describes the allure of Alexander Wang's ripped tights and Marchesa's Oscar-worthy dresses, Amy artfully layers in something else: ultimately this book is about how the fashion industry is an exaggerated mirror of human fallibility—reflecting our desperate desire to belong, to make a mark, to be included. For Amy is the first to admit that as much as she is embarrassed by the thrill she gets when she receives an invitation to an exclusive after-party, she can't help but RSVP "yes."

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Editorial Review

Review
"Hilarious, insightful and smart. A must-read for anyone who wears clothes.” (Chelsea Handler)

"Book Report “A” rating...a witty and candid ‘outsider’s view from inside the fashion industry,’ complete with an intimidating Anna Wintour encounter." (*In Touch*)

"Odell's shamelessly dry, very smart wit is blogger-perfect, but it translates well into writing reverentially and intelligently about fashion. Whether or not you also love to hate or hate to love the fashion world, you will straight-up adore Amy Odell's candid observations and anecdotes culled from her years covering the runways.” (*Bustle, "September 2015’s Best Books"*)

"This delightful book of essays by Cosmopolitan.com editor Amy Odell pulls back the curtain and shows that it’s not always so fabulous climbing the fashion ladder." (*Refinery29, "Fall’s Most Highly Anticipated Nonfiction Reads"*)

"A funny, insightful debut." (*Harper's Bazaar*)

“Whether you're interested in pursuing a career in publishing, public relations or design, or you're just fascinated with what *really* goes on behind-the-scenes without the usual sugarcoating, we'd say this is required reading.” (*Fashionista.com*)

“A backstage pass to the intimidating, backbiting industry.” (*US Weekly*)

"Just delicious." (*Book Riot*)

"A great and almost natural comic narrative, laced with lots of name-dropping, will evoke chuckles—and a sigh of relief that there are no reader portraits." (*Booklist*)

"Funny, insightful and relatable to pretty much anyone who works in media." (*AM NY*)

“If you haven’t snagged any invites (to NYFW), let *Tales from the Back Row*, Cosmopolitan.com Editor Amy Odell’s first book, out now, transport you.” (*Trending NY*)

“TALES FROM THE BACK ROW takes you from the hottest fashion shows to the coolest after parties, along the decidedly unglamorous roads Amy Odell travels to get there. Don’t miss this terrific debut. It’s better than landing the most coveted seat at fashion week.” (Lauren Weisberger, New York Times bestselling author of Revenge Wears Prada and The Devil Wears Prada)

“Amy is one of my favorite people in the fashion industry. She's smart, stylish and simply not a dick.” (Grace Helbig)

"TALES FROM THE BACK ROW is a delicious peek behind the curtain of fame and fashion. Amy Odell doesn't pull any punches—not at the industry, the celebrities circling it, or even at herself—and her insider dish will make you laugh out loud." (The Fug Girls)

About the Author
Amy Odell is the editor of Cosmopolitan.com. Chief amongst her interests are cats and Beyoncé. She is a feminist (thank you for asking) and the author of *Tales from the Back Row*.

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Tales from the Back Row

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Bloggers

mastering the lame flamingo



Landing a job as a full-time fashion writer was a glamorous dream I never expected to fulfill. Especially after I got fired from my first job. I was an editorial assistant at Jewcy, a website about Jewish stuff that was supposed to reach cool young people but ended up not reaching a large audience at all and shut down before being relaunched by people who could find an actual audience for the thing. My job involved sitting in a cramped office, filing invoices, and assisting someone who was sort of weird and not particularly warm. This was New Media 101, and I got the $400-a-week paycheck, benefits not included, to show for it. I'm pretty sure that even though this was the kind of real, high-value work college is supposed to groom you for, I made less than I did at my high school hostess job at a Tex-Mex chain. Vogue editor-in-chief Anna Wintour, who was fired from Harper's Bazaar, once said everyone should get fired once because "it's a great learning experience." I agree: you should get fired once because it is a great learning experience. For instance, if you didn't grow up buying full-price Pucci like a socialite, you might have to learn how to live on the same amount of money your employed friends spend on lattes.

It also, theoretically, teaches you how not to get fired again.

There's a good chance that getting fired will be the best thing that ever happened to you. No matter how excited I've been to quit a job and move on to the next, I've always been terrified to quit. When I hostessed at that local Tex-Mex joint, the restaurant manager knew I would quit when I left for college, yet still I was nervous to tell him I was leaving. Having the unpleasant "I quit" conversation feels like telling someone, "No one likes you." So a boss asking you to leave a job—and it's probably one you hate; most people who get fired don't love the thing they're getting fired from (How could you? They're firing you!)—only saves you the extreme awkwardness of actually quitting. It also forces you to find something better as quickly as possible, instead of pussyfooting around about your job search because you've settled into a routine of G-chatting for six hours a day and doing work for just two, while making enough money to afford Bravo, possibly also HBO.

I was pretty lucky because after I got fired from Jewcy, I assisted, reported, and wrote five-sentence-long magazine articles as a freelancer for several months, and then New York magazine hired me to start its fashion blog, the Cut. This was the terrifying beginning of my career as a fashion journalist.

I should say this job didn't just fall from the sky and into my lap. That's just not how opportunities work, unless you are Paris Hilton in 2005 (which is not an advisable situation anyway, since you'd have to go everywhere wearing a neon loincloth and clear stilettos). I had been running around Manhattan asking celebrities awkward questions at cocktail parties as a freelance party reporter for New York magazine. Picture a girl in T. J. Maxx trying to interrupt Elle Macpherson's conversation in the middle of the private

lounge of a $500-a-night hotel. (Macpherson must have sensed my deep longing to interview her about summer flings, the subject of the film we were feting, because as soon as she finished with her conversation, she turned and fled.) I had been doing this for nearly a year, so New York magazine had a sense of my skills. Also, I had a competing offer to run another fashion blog, which I told them about in hopes they'd offer me a full-time job. Voilà. As soon as someone else wanted me, they decided to consider me for their top-secret fashion blogger position. Pro tip: the best way to make someone want you is to make someone else want you more.

Just hours after I told my party-reporting editor about the competing offer, the editor of NYmag.com called me and said something like, "We want to start a fashion blog. Do you want to try out to be our fashion blogger?" He may as well have asked me if, moving forward, I'd like to get around town exclusively by unicorn. Oh! Oh! Yes, I do! I do I do!!! I could not believe that I had been offered a full-time job at NYmag.com, a highly respected publication. I was so afraid of becoming a failure that to have any work, much less an absolute dream writing job at the only magazine I was dying to work for, felt unreal. Even if I would be blogging about fashion.

"I would be interested in that, yes," I said into the phone using my spa voice. I happened to be rushing through SoHo to crash a friend's midmorning kickboxing class with an expired guest pass. I felt like one of those highly enviable ladies who run around wearing yoga outfits in the middle of the day because instead of office work, they take barre class and buy kale at Whole Foods. But now, with an audition to become New York magazine's first fashion blogger, I turned right around and climbed back up the six flights of stairs to my apartment to hunker down with my cat and The View (poor man's barre class) to start working.

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At this point in my career, I felt fairly confident in my fashion knowledge because I had interviewed Tim Gunn a few times and had seen every episode of Project Runway. This—along with searching "fashion" in Google News—surely gave me the credentials I needed to complete the writing samples I had to turn in as my tryout for the role. I would later learn I knew absolutely nothing about fashion. Or blogging. But somehow, I faked my way through the interview process well enough to get a job offer. I tried to be all calm and cool about it when I got the call.

"Oh, thanks so much," I said, reverting to spa voice. "Can I think it over and call you back?"

Then I called my parents to shout, "OH MY GOD I GOT IT! THE JOB EVERY GIRL WOULD KILL FOR! [INSERT MORE THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA REFERENCES]!!!!" This was a dream. The royal wedding of jobs. All those awkward celebrity encounters had finally gotten me somewhere! And also: fuck that dickhead who fired me!

Something like three minutes later, I just couldn't take it any longer and lunged toward the phone. I had this odd feeling that if I didn't say yes it might go away. "I accept!!!" I told my future editor, now on the edge of hysteria. I've since learned that job offers aren't like people you've slept with or cupcakes—they do not just disappear. I couldn't wait to tell the people I was working with at Condé Nast Traveler, where I had recently accepted a freelance three-day-a-week job assisting the sole web editor, that I had to quit to go become NYmag.com's first fashion blogger. The vocally fashion-obsessed editorial assistant who sat behind me and acted like I didn't exist would be shocked. The glee this filled me with was almost enough to counteract the nervousness I had about my writing abilities: how was I ever going to be as good or funny every single day as the existing and enormously talented NYmag.com blogging team?

I started my coveted fashion blogging job at NYmag.com in February 2008, right before Fall Fashion Week. "What an exciting time to start!" everyone said. Well, no—what a terrifying time to start. I had two days to learn everything about fashion, and blogging. I can't even memorize a Britney Spears song in two days.

People who wrote for the internet, referred to broadly at the time as "bloggers," were just beginning to earn legitimacy in the fashion world. On January 31, 2008, the New York Times published a story about the rise of beauty bloggers, boldly stating, "the cosmetics industry has stopped seeing bloggers as bottom feeders." (Of course, this feels hilarious now that beauty vloggers are millionaires . . .)

The same was true for some fashion bloggers. The term can apply to all kinds of different people, many of whose worth was debated intensely. Fashion bloggers are like the global warming of the fashion industry—their impact only selectively acknowledged despite their undeniable existence. At this time, a debate was raging in the fashion industry about a blogger's place in the industry. Did they deserve the front-row seats they had started getting? Most famously, Bryanboy sat front row at a Dolce & Gabbana show with a laptop, which really sent people into a frenzy. But not long after that, when then thirteen-year-old fashion blogger Tavi Gevinson sat front row at the Dior Couture show (wearing a gigantic, view-obstructing bow on her head, no less), the raised eyebrows turned to outright vitriol. Industry lifers couldn't understand how a teenager could burst onto the scene with a website, a dream, and a cute outfit and be awarded status they believed it should take decades to earn. Yet, you can see how easy it is to get confused about bloggers, firstly because it's confusing that taking photos of oneself wearing clothes now translates to, for a very lucky few, a lucrative career path. But this is only one kind of fashion blogger, for a few varieties exist:

1. Journalists who happen to write for blogs. This is my category. I'm a journalist whose medium happens to be the internet—a "blog," or "vertical" (fancy name for "section of a website that probably has its own tab at the top").

2. Personal-style bloggers. The people who post to the internet photos of themselves wearing clothes. The most fully formed personal-style blogs also treat viewers to a broader look at their subjects' lives. Think: photos of the inside of a hotel room, closet porn, this vintage store I went to this one time, cupcakes I thought were really pretty. These bloggers are bang-up stylists, own the best clothes, and eat the best baked goods, and I am jealous of all of them.

3. Fashion fans who chronicle their fandom online. Due to the independent nature of their sites, bloggers can create their own journalistic standards. Whereas many news outlets have rules about not accepting expensive gifts or free trips, independent bloggers can accept as many free gifts and trips as they want (if a blogger reviews a product they receive for free, FTC regulations require that the blogger disclose the product was a gift). The more gifts they get, the better off they are, because who running an indie website really has the money to fly to São Paolo Fashion Week? And if you're in the business of sharing photos of yourself wearing clothes and aren't independently wealthy, where would you be without free or heavily discounted clothes with which to continually update your look? For this type of blogger, the consequence of receiving so much free stuff is that you pretty much have to cover all of it favorably or only feature stuff you truly love. So you end up with a fan site. I don't see this as much different from fashion magazines like Vogue or Harper's Bazaar that primarily promote the goods of their advertisers and cover things they love in the most—if at times, painfully—positive fashion. These sites are often very personality driven, even if they're not solely about how a certain person dresses.

4. Instagram "celebs." People with half a million followers, who are known better for that than anything else. They might have a blog, too, but their agents (because fashion blogging has become so weirdly lucrative and fame making, it now requires agents) tout their impressively robust Instagram followings as chief among

their talents.

5. Street-style photographers. The most famous street-style photographers, like Phil Oh, Scott "the Sartorialist" Schuman, and Tommy Ton, got their start by posting to their own sites photos they took of people wearing outfits. Though photographers of their caliber now get a lot of high-paying commercial work, they're still called bloggers because they still update their websites—the main reason they came to be known in the first place. But they're really not bloggers in my mind so much as photojournalists. And they've become remarkably powerful—they sit front row at shows and get paid tens of thousands of dollars and up to shoot major ad campaigns. What's more, getting photographed by one of them has become a true accomplishment. Wearing an oversized angora coat and man loafers to a fashion show, catching the eye of the Sartorialist, getting photographed by him, and then seeing your photo land on his site is the street-style version of admission to Harvard. An irrefutable nod to your utmost talent in dressing yourself.

The distinction between bloggers (the lesser) and other print media people (more legitimate, allegedly) is not only disappearing but actually reversing. Whereas they used to begrudgingly award bloggers and vloggers standing tickets and didn't care about that thing called Instagram, now brands practically beg internet stars to show up to events and fashion shows and Instagram something—anything! If a PR person overhears you saying "That tiny coffee cup is cute; we should Instagram that!" they will come running up to you and ask if a waiter can bring one over on a private tray with its own thumbnail-sized coordinating donut. Practically every professional writer and photographer in the world now works on something that could qualify as a blog and, therefore, could be categorized as a blogger. It's impossible to work in media in any form now and not put your work on the internet in some way. Yet at the same time, putting myself and the Blonde Salad (yes, that's a real personal-style blogger) and Phil Oh in the same category is like seeing dolphins and whales and mermaids jumping around in the ocean and calling them all "fish."

We need to implement new distinctions for "new media" people. As much I would like it to be my job, I am never going to succeed in making a career out of posting photos of myself wearing different outfits for people to enthuse over on the internet.

As for my personal style, it progressed slower than the speed of fossilization. When I started at the Cut, I knew as much about fashion as I did about gardening. Just as I knew soil is required to grow vegetables, some of which grow aboveground and some of which grow belowground, I knew that people wear clothes. I knew that really expensive ones with price tags affixed to labels by leather strings were more likely to be considered "fashion" than Jeggings with clear MMMMMMMM stickers running down the legs. For months when I started, I would get up before seven each morning so that I could read every word in Women's Wear Daily to figure out what mattered the most in the fashion world that day. I could read enough to learn about the fashion business and how it worked and all that. I could figure out which designers worked at which labels, which labels people cared about the most, and what the trends were in everything from online retail strategy to spring denim. But I could not nearly as easily adopt a sense of personal style that said, "I am a person who understands fashion and excels at getting dressed. Do worship my choice of blouse." I was very cavelady about it: "This is shirt, this is pants, this is outfit." I used to wear this one white knit top with a tattoo print-esque design on it (shhh!) that had three-quarter-length bell sleeves. I had not yet switched to skinny jeans, so I wore said top with boot-cut Abercrombie jeans I'd owned since high school—the "worn in" kind that looked like they had been used as a rag to wash hippos before they became pants. (This was the hot look for seventeen-year-olds in Austin, Texas.) I wore Reef flip-flops made of fuzzy leopard-printed material. In terms of an everyday outfit for a person who would leave her house, it was perfectly fine in that it clothed me. But as an outfit for a person who would have to go to fashion shows and write about them, it was embarrassing. Like arriving at a wedding and not realizing your nipples are showing until you get there, and then you spend the next three hours wondering if anyone else can tell. Visible nipples would have been

preferable to my tattoo prints and bell sleeves. At least then I'd have something in common with runway models, who I'm sure would prefer to wear sheer clothing than be seen in my old clothes on a runway.

But I'm not a stylist—I'm a writer and editor. It's not necessarily my job to know how to put really interesting outfits together. It's my job to understand trends, interview designers and models and celebrities, and to piece it all together for various blog items for my readers. I had to look professional, yes, and ideally sort of stylish, but I didn't necessarily need to know that the black-and-white leopard Cavalli top goes perfectly with those Lucite-heeled neon-trimmed Marni shoes and that pair of high-waisted jean shorts with the Chanel brooch on the upper right ass cheek.

I loved getting to riff and joke all day about celebrity clothing lines and J. Lo's sequined body stockings. I loved taking interviews and turning them into stories. I love writing about almost anything, really. But I am not a personal-style blogger, and I do not possess the same talents as Rumi "Fashiontoast" Neely, who is one of the original stars. She shot a series a few years back I'll always remember. She was wearing white and sashaying down a dark road holding a dream catcher. This is her work. Put on a ridiculously cool outfit, pose somewhere telegenic with a dream catcher or meal of fast food or one of her fluffy cats, repeat. She's managed to make a handsome career out of living her life as though it was one giant fashion editorial aka making her followers (me) wildly jealous of her life and taste. She ended up starring in a campaign for Forever 21. She has an agent. She's a jet-setter.

What I find people are usually referring to when they say "fashion bloggers," are people like Fashiontoast, or the Man Repeller (who models clothing that women love but that—wait for it—repels men), and Sea of Shoes (who, well, actually does the same thing). They are personal-style bloggers who operate independent sites, formatted like blogs. Some brands are really into having these bloggers come to Fashion Week and will organize them all in the front row the way I imagine Martha Stewart's flavored salt collection to be arranged attractively in the foreground of her spice cupboard. Brands seem to think that putting a bunch of bloggers in the front row will make a statement about how digitally savvy they are. But this says very little: seating a bunch of personal-style bloggers together in one place just means that that brand was able to print out the names of the most successful independently employed professional clothes wearers and tape them to some adjoining chair backs.

These bloggers are valuable in terms of publicizing certain brands. They have loyal followings that buy the items they link to or wear. And they're often "safe" because they generally cover everything positively. I was not a visible "face" in the industry and am not guaranteed to be positive about everything, so I get a great view of these bloggers from my seat twelve rows behind them, in the back row. I look upon these beautiful, ornately dressed people in envy, marveling at how I'd never think to wear two sheer blouses at once.

What's interesting about the bloggers' rush to the front row is how quickly they're displacing print media. Some of these bloggers have more significant—and probably more valuable—web presences than some legacy media brands. And you wonder why that is when these magazines have at least a couple dozen people on staff, and these blogs are run by maybe one person plus, arguably, whoever takes their pictures. Why some magazine websites aren't met with the same enthusiasm as ManRepeller.com is an embarrassment to these brands, which have, presumably, many, many more resources than a girl with a computer, a dream, and an affinity for fabulous shoes.

It's not like people like Sea of Shoes have taken Anna Wintour's front-row seat (LOL, no), but they might end up sitting across from her, which suggests they're of fairly similar importance as far as fashion world personalities go. Anna is surely more powerful, but she and the Seas of Shoeses of this world do have one significant thing in common: they're recognizable. They have a look. They're street-style photographer bait,

whether they like it (Sea of Shoes) or not (Anna, seemingly). Street-style publicity is important because it helps make someone a personality, and the more of a personality you are, the more valuable you become. The bloggers seem to like street-style attention, for the most part, but they don't have much choice because it's essential to their brands. Meanwhile, for people like Anna, who walks past photographers as though it's just started raining and she can't wait to get inside, getting to wherever one's going is always more important than getting photographed going there. Anna is part of the group who shows up for the work itself, but for the new guard of fashion internet celebs, getting attention for showing up is part of the work.

Street style has become VERY intense at Fashion Week. It can feel like the paparazzi stalking Britney Spears in the weeks leading up to her head-shaving meltdown, except Fashion Week people don't scream at the street-style photographers for taking their pictures. Rather, they invite it by dressing elaborately and out of season and making themselves as available as a hot dog vendor outside show venues. I once came across a serious street-style photograph, by esteemed street-style photographer Mr. Newton, of a woman who happened to be a fashion blogger, "having lunch at the Seagram Building" in Manhattan on a Monday, wearing a sheer black blouse with nothing underneath. You could see all of her boobs, so it was like she was topless, and one imagined if she was indeed just on a lunchtime stroll, there would be lots of bankers in suits gathering around, staring at her boobs. I remember wondering, Is this what street style has come to? The painfully stylish look is so done that people have to be NUDE to get photographed?

It used to be that people who had clearly styled their outfits just so would linger around fashion events pretending to be engaged in meaningful conversations with friends they see so infrequently that 90 percent of their interactions are air-kissing. And then if they were dressed right, a street-style photographer would notice their fab outfit, and they'd be like, "Oh, me? You want to photograph me? OKAY, I GUESS I HAVE TIME! Enchanté, Josephine, but IT'S TIME FOR MY MOMENT!" And then they'd pose with one leg bent inward a little bit like they'd practiced it. Now, swarms of street-style paparazzi and being photographed for that little corner of the internet has become such a fact at Fashion Week that it's now perfectly acceptable to show up dressed really bizarrely and flashily and just stand there until people gather around you to photograph you. You couldn't find a more perfect relic of this narcissistic internet age.

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People who go to Fashion Week sometimes dress just to get photographed. This does not mean people were necessarily dressing more thoughtfully or more creatively or (dare I even suggest the concept) more practically, but now they seem to dress just purely outlandishly, wearing clothing just for the sake of ornamentation and spectacle. As I started my second year at the Cut, I noticed that's how it worked: the stranger and flashier you looked—the more garish of a trend cocktail you could turn your body into—the more likely you were to get shot by these photographers. Runway clothes often work the same way: you see so many "normal" outfits as a person who works in the fashion business, that only the weird stuff becomes interesting and the so-weird-it's-borderline-not-clothing stuff becomes the only apparel that can possibly unhinge the extreme boredom brought on by most fashion shows that suckles the life straight from the teat of a fashion person's soul. Standing out—and I mean really standing out—becomes the new normal. The good thing about the street-style nonsense is that you get even more spectacular people watching than you'd get without it. Women end up going to fashion shows wearing stiletto sandals and chiffon skirts with no tights in February, or with glittery pineapples affixed to their heads, or with hair dyed to look gray instead of the other way around, or with big furry neon tails attached to their purses or slung around their necks because they're Louis Vuitton and Prada and therefore elevated from completely absurd items of excess to so on-trend. If a well-styled Fashion Week person got off the plane in 99 percent of the places on the rest of the earth, they'd be treated like aliens, of this I'm certain. Because that's how you fit in in this industry: wear something that would look insane just about everywhere that is not Fashion Week.

I once undertook an experiment to see if I could get photographed. At this point, I had three years at the Cut on my résumé: I understood the secret salt of the personal-style blogger. So I decided to go to the shows one day wearing a street-style costume. Ideally, I'd end up with a story about how street-style stardom boils down to a few things that don't necessarily bespeak one's totes fab style, but rather a sanitized version of looking ridiculous. My friend at work, Diana, a market editor, tried to call in a bunch of spectacular designer things for me to wear. This being Fashion Week, no one was interested in lending me an outfit because I'm not Madonna (breaking news) and they had actual important shows to put on—and here the back-row girl wants to borrow something? Though just about everyone we asked had negative interest in getting back to us to even reject us, we did manage to get Miu Miu to loan us a pair of open-toed glitter booties. But as the days dragged on and the window of time in which I had to pull off this experiment closed, I became increasingly anxious.

Day three of Fashion Week arrived. This is one of the most important days of New York Fashion Week, because designers Prabal Gurung, Alexander Wang, and Joseph Altuzarra all usually show. Often this is a busy day of actual work for me (reporting and writing about what happens that day, by which I mean willing things to happen because usually nothing worth writing about happens when all that's at stake is a bunch of people sitting in a room watching skinny tall girls walk back and forth wearing stuff), which leaves little time for self-indulgent outfit planning.

On day three, Prabal Gurung often has the first big show of the day. He is a really fabulous human being who remembers people and is always extra-kind when he speaks to them, but not in a fake, meeting-your-friend's-other-bridesmaids sort of way that makes you want to fork yourself. Before the show that year, I was on the list for a backstage interview, as was then New York Times critic Cathy Horyn, so I had to wait.

Like moviemaking, waiting is a big part of Fashion Week. If you're not waiting backstage for a designer or headsetted person to find you important enough to speak to, you're waiting to get inside a show venue, or waiting in your seat for a show to start. Most shows start, on average, half an hour late. Which doesn't make sense because, you may wonder, how long could it take to comb a girl's hair, fill in her eyebrows, and slip her into a dress? Forever, actually. It takes until the end of time to do these things. Partly because the models just came from a show where they had their hair painted with liquid clay and their entire eye sockets coated with red glitter. So that has to be undone before their hair, makeup, and nails can be done all over again for the show you're waiting to see. Then the designer has to finish visiting with important fashion critics like Cathy Horyn, before he finishes dressing his models and regarding them and so forth. Also, he has to wait for his seats to fill up, because often attendees are late because they had to preen for some cameras and have no expectation of these things starting on time anyway. (Some designers can afford to start on time, because everything revolves around them, and the guests are the ones who will really feel stupid if they are late and miss the show, but this is only, like, two people.)

Luckily, while I waited, I bumped into Bryanboy, one of the original fashion bloggers who dresses quite fabulously and gets photographed at fashion nonsense all the time. I filled him in on my scheme and asked him what he thought I should wear to actually pull this off. Bryanboy had borrowed a few beautiful designer things, including the colorful top he was wearing, to wear to the shows. I remember him telling me he thought street-style dressing had become so extreme that only the absolute most cutting-edge of all clothing would make an impact on photographers in a given season, unless they already knew you as a street-style celebrity. What is the most cutting-edge apparel in all the land? Well, possibly couture—the world's most expensive, entirely handmade clothes, that only qualify as couture when they are actually certified by a French council. But there exists a league of clothes arguably even more cutting-edge than couture, and that is next season's clothes. Meaning, the clothes we were seeing on the runways right now that wouldn't hit stores for average women to buy for another several months. I was beginning to despair. Dresses don't just go

straight from a runway to my body because, again, I'm not Madonna. How would I turn myself into a street-style parody without doing something embarrassing like showing up wearing a coconut bra and leggings? It was the only way I might ever look street-style strange enough.

Just as Gurung finished his chat with Cathy, celebrity stylist and designer Rachel Zoe came bounding into the venue. Well, Rachel Zoe didn't have her name put on a list to go backstage, but I remember that she did seem to have free rein to run around wherever she wanted that season, devoid of the seven layers of badges, wristbands, and Hogwarts-level clearance the plebeians like me need to get backstage to do their work.

She wore a black suit with flared pants and a multistrand gold bracelet and her signature oversized dark sunglasses, with a QVC tag hanging around her neck (she was showing her QVC line that season and had to wear credentials for that, but not this). And, whereas badges were outfit death for most not-famous people, she was probably getting her face photographed off anyway. But that's what you get when you're a burgeoning icon with an iconic look and a Bravo show.

Gurung slipped away from Cathy to greet Zoe, who was in a big rush to get back to QVC. Zoe deserved his enthusiasm because she helped make him a big deal by dressing her clients (Demi Moore, Kate Hudson) in Gurung's pieces when he was relatively unknown. Their love, as it manifested that day, is that of two people in a long-distance relationship who just want to do it as soon as they see each other. Zoe greeted Gurung with a slew of exclamations involving giggling and OH MY GODs and lots of squealing. He did the same, they uttered each other's names orgasmically. Mid-embrace, Gurung lifted Zoe's lithe body off the ground, she wrapped her legs around his waist, and there was more giggling and shrieking and displaying. I enjoyed watching all this, though it had the collective effect of making me feel even less important than I already do, as I was being held by a few headsetted people in an area away from where the racks of clothes hung in clear plastic. Cathy and Rachel Zoe were allowed within the racks, but I was not, because I had been eating granola bars all morning like a child, and my hands were clearly unacceptably sticky and dangerous to the dresses! (Kidding, I would never let fashion people see me eating. What kind of person do you think I am?)

"Show me EVERYTHING!!!!" Rachel said in a fit of genuine excitement, as their hands fluttered, and Gurung began taking her from dress to dress on the racks. Zoe and Gurung progressed down the racks, with him explaining, her gasping and speaking with periods between all her words ("Oh. My. God. This. Is. So. Stunning. I. Can't. Even. Handle. The. Purple"). Everyone in the room acted like they weren't captivated by the exchange, but they totally were, and everyone's life at that moment revolved around it. Except maybe Cathy, who exchanged pleasantries with Rachel, though she didn't embrace her while lifting her body off the ground and so Rachel therefore didn't get the opportunity to wrap her legs around Cathy's waist. There is not a lot of displaying that goes with this interaction, because when two women talk it's frowned upon to act as though they're in a day care center, but when a woman and a gay man talk, years of adult development and maturation can acceptably be tossed out the window.

In a few minutes, Rachel left, as though her presence were all just a montage in someone else's reality show. At this point, I was supposed to get to talk to Prabal, but it didn't happen because the models had to put in their runway dresses! Time waits for no man! (Except at Fashion Week, when it actually waits for all of them.)

A mass of slow-moving people entered the venue a few minutes before the show started: evidence of a major celeb walking among us. All I could see of this Famous One gracing us with her presence that day was a giant curly mass of yellow-and-pink cotton candy wig topped with a pillow-sized pink iridescent bow. The dramatically accessorized hair bobbed within a circle of giant security guards and various other people looking extremely purposeful. I figured it was Nicki Minaj, though someone in the crowd loudly asked, "IS

THAT LADY GAGA?" Oh, the fool, mistaking the top of Nicki Minaj's head for Lady Gaga's! In a room full of fashion people! That was so embarrassing for him! I tweeted the errant remark immediately and it got more reactions than 90 percent of my other tweets combined that Fashion Week. For that, I would like to thank, deeply, the gay community.

After Nicki Minaj was seated and everyone who had left their seats to ogle her—thereby setting back the progress we'd made toward starting the show by about 60 percent—had been forced by security to sit down again, the show finally started more than half an hour late. As annoying as this is, it doesn't really matter since fashion shows have one-hour time slots, and the shows themselves take only a few minutes. Finally, I got to see what exactly had been going on with all the colors and patterns hanging in the plastic wrap backstage.

That season, Gurung showed sheer pants dripping with purple metallic Latex, flirty dresses with mesh paneling where you'd expect to see a woman's underpants, and pretty floral-inspired prints. Some of these prints looked the way turquoise and floral wallpaper would look if you were high and stared at it too long. These things would definitely get me photographed. Too bad I was more likely to turn into a cat than be allowed to borrow them.

Everyone clapped, and Prabal came out onto the runway to receive his applause. Once the show wrapped, I got three minutes backstage to talk to the designer. Then everyone dashed off to their next show, except the people with especially good hair and expensive shoes and striking monochromatic pantsuits who decided to linger around to pose for street-style photographers while either waiting for their drivers or pretending to wait for their drivers so they could get attention. I would look so stupid trying to do this.

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With a few days of Fashion Week left, I had nothing but the borrowed Miu Miu shoes to wear. My editor pulled me aside and got serious.

"You just have to make do with what we have," she said. "Wear a white button-down and jeans, the Miu Miu shoes, Diana's bracelets, and red lipstick. Not a brick red, but street-style red. I'll loan you my Chanel purse." I figured that anyone who owned her own Chanel purse knew what she was talking about. And Diana and I felt relieved we would no longer have to scramble trying to call in all the clothes on hold for J. Lo or the other Fashion Week Bambis who might need them.

I dilly-dallied about getting the assignment done because I felt nervous about trying to be a street-style star. I felt comfortable operating as a behind-the-scenes member of this crazy scene. I always wanted to make it as a writer and editor. If ever I were to get attention from photographers, I envisioned that it would be warranted by my hard work and success, or moving into a position that made me inherently interesting enough to photograph, like most editors in chief. And quite frankly, I didn't want to court the attention. There's a quote I like from David Sedaris about his advice to aspiring David Sedarises that perfectly captures my issues with self-promotion: "I don't think pushiness helps at all. It's unbecoming and bespeaks a talent for self-promotion rather than for writing." But marketing oneself is a vital part of the fashion industry, and you see this throughout popular fashion blogs—the most successful aren't necessarily the best, but they are expert promoters. If they weren't, they wouldn't get front-row seats at shows.

Somehow, I had gotten myself an assignment to do the exact thing I never thought I'd do. Still I had committed to getting the story, so I went home and tried to find street-style-y jeans and a stylish-enough white button-down. I grabbed a couple white shirts and a couple pairs of jeans and took them to the office the

next day in a shopping bag. I had been told to style my hair wavy—you know, carefree and low maintenance like I didn't try at all. Because do not forget that the secret to being stylish is to look like you didn't try at all when you actually tried really fucking hard.

When I got to work on the appointed day, Diana and my editor examined the options and told me to wear paint-splattered boyfriend jeans that rolled up around the ankle with a crisp white shirt by +J (that's fancy for "from Uniqlo," FYI) tucked in. I rolled up the sleeves a little bit and slipped on a bunch of Diana's bangles. I looked like I was wearing a rhinestone-studded Slinky by Juicy Couture on my arm. And just in case that wasn't extreme enough (because at this stage of street style, you could wear an oversized glittery clamshell from the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show around your entire torso and you would not look overdressed), I unbuttoned the top couple of shirt buttons to reveal what you might call a "statement choker" by Dannijo that was lying around the fashion closet. I wore Diana's lipstick, slung the black quilted Chanel purse over my arm, slipped into the towering Miu Miu glitter booties, added oversized black Prada glasses that I had once found in the back of a cab, and I was ready to go. I felt like a reality TV star who got dressed for the sole purpose of cruising through paparazzi. Look out, Fashion Week—another tacky bitch is on her way!

I convinced the magazine to hire a car for me for the day, because if I was going to get photographed as much as possible I would need to be in as many places as possible as quickly as possible—without ruining my look. And, despite Fashion Week having a centralized venue referred to as "the tents" where most shows are supposed to take place, two consecutive shows on my list of things to hit were at different addresses.

Since Fashion Week wouldn't be Fashion Week if there weren't constantly a new thing that's cooler than an older thing, new venues continually crop up. Some designers show at Milk, a photo studio located in the meatpacking district, a neighborhood that's become hip to the point of self-parody. The Chihuahuas that live over there dress even tackier than the Europeans who wear black stilettos and liquid leggings to wait two hours for champagne brunch there every Saturday and Sunday. Around the corner from Milk you will also find the boutique Jeffrey, which is so absurdly Fashion it became a skit on Saturday Night Live.

Theoretically, when your show is not at the tents, it should be at Milk, but that's never the case because some designers, despite possessing the credentials and means to show in these places, get sponsored to show elsewhere or simply prefer something grander. Marc Jacobs shows without fail in the Lexington Avenue Armory, on the opposite side of town, because the space is gigantic and he can erect a runway within his own extravagant art installation. (For his fall 2011 show, for instance, he spent $1 million, possibly more, the New York Times reported, on a set that involved erecting walls of tufted vinyl, which company president Robert Duffy said, "only half-joking, was a padded cell"; the floor and benches were entirely mirrored; and each of the sixty-three models wore $180 worth of fake hair.) Alexander Wang likes to show in non–Mother Ship venues; since 2010, he has preferred the pier, usually on the very west, difficult-to-access side of Manhattan. It's possible he likes it because it looks like a big empty warehouse, and over the past eight years anyone in New York who wants to be cool makes sure a significant portion or aspect of their lives takes place in big, empty industrial spaces. The dingier and bigger and emptier the warehouse is, the cooler you are, hence the move of many hipsters from the gentrified parts of Brooklyn to the abandoned factory buildings to their east, that have no insulation in the walls, possibly no heat in the living quarters at all, and are about as comfortable to occupy in the winter as a bathtub lined with damp bedsheets. But Alexander Wang can show on his Chosen Pier that is out of everyone's way, a good distance removed from all the other shows because his clothes—the kinds of things people who live in warehouses and also have money are supposed to wear if they want to live up to their reputation of dwelling in a warehouse—have become the biggest must-sees of New York Fashion Week.

So it was not snobbery to believe mass transit was not going to work. At the tail end of summer, when

Fashion Week occurs, the subway feels like a steam room in a Dumpster, and subjecting one's skin to that does not aid in looking beautiful. Also, I'd be wearing uncomfortable shoes all day and I am a pansy about uncomfortable shoes. Besides, being driven around all day conveys an air of significance, and the most captivating street-style subjects embody this air. Given that my outfit was only mildly significant, the car was part of the costume, really.

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My first show was Vera Wang—the designer famous for celebrity red carpet and wedding gowns—at the tents in Lincoln Center. This meant I would have the opportunity to sashay my ass around the large Lincoln Center plaza where photographers look for people to shoot. This particular show is attended by all the important editors of all the major fashion magazines along with a few pretty famous celebs, which brings out the whole horde of photographers.

And so commenced one of the most awkward days of my life.

If all the sparkly shit on my person and the textbook-sized Chanel bag hanging off my arm didn't make me interesting, at least my bangles jingled a lot. So when I walked I sounded like Santa: jingle jingle jingle ~stop~ *pose* jingle jingle jingle jingle.

I soon realized this outfit made it disturbingly, unexpectedly easy for me to get attention. Within a few struts around the plaza, somehow managing not to fall over in the heels, some Japanese photographers were all UP in my Juicy Couture Slinky. They wanted photos of my whole outfit but also my wrists, my shoes, my statement choker. Had they the proper imaging equipment, they probably would have X-rayed me to see what accessories my organs were wearing that day. They also wanted to know who made what—the shoes and the bag were obvious, but who made the bangles? The choker? The white shirt? It was frantic. But: I was doing it. I was street style.

When I stepped inside the tents, another small throng of photographers gathered around me, kneeling at my glitter shoes as though begging for the secret to my fabulousness. As uncomfortable as this kind of attention makes me feel when I'm thinking about getting it, it felt kind of not that bad to actually get it. Is this why people become shamelessly self-promotional? I wondered. Because attention for something as base level in terms of achievement as wearing clothes and walking around is so addictive it's like the only thing I want to do for the rest of Fashion Week if not my life? Multiply the attention I was receiving by about 100, and you have a day in the life of superfamous fashion blogger Susie Bubble at Fashion Week. If Susie, author of Style Bubble, one of the most successful fashion sites of its kind, is the Angelina Jolie of Fashion Week street style, I was like a D-list Bachelorette-level reality star at least.

After Vera Wang, I had to head downtown to West Chelsea for the Rodarte show, one of the most avant-garde of New York Fashion Week where you are pretty much guaranteed to see some truly weird shit on the runway along with a Taylor Swift–level celebrity in the audience. My plan was to meet NYmag.com's street-style photographer down the block from the show so he could photograph my outfit for the story. I found him slightly removed from where most of the street-style photographers lingered. (Now you see so many street-style photographers outside major shows that they can't just wait outside the entrance to a venue—they actually have to hustle down the block to get away from the whole crowd of them if they want any chance at capturing their own "moment" with a costumed fashion person without getting elbowed in the face by an aspiring one of them who doesn't have street-style manners.) He gave me some tips on posing. Apparently, a common famous blogger pose is to put the toe of one foot on the ground crossed behind the other. I call it the "lame flamingo." This comes in handy when people want to photograph your feet because

it gives them more dimension. It's also never a bad idea to pose with one hand on the hip and one hand in the crook where your bag's strap connects to your bag. This way, people can photograph your nail art against your bag. That's called a "detail" shot. Nothing gets street-style fanatics off like a patterned manicure floating near some purse hardware that says "Céline."

The one thing you don't want to do is stand with your legs apart, both feet facing forward—which would be my go-to pose had I not had professionals to instruct me otherwise—which makes you look "like you just got off a horse," as one street-style photographer told me. Although I have a feeling if I had just dismounted a horse (as my means of transportation for the day), I'd be met with much enthusiasm.

Photographers behind my colleague from NYmag.com noticed me getting my photo taken, so as I made my way down the block toward the Rodarte show, other street-style photographers approached me. Tamu McPherson, who runs the street-style site All the Pretty Birds and who shoots street style for Vogue Italia, stopped me to take my picture. I was shocked to have drawn the interest of someone as respected as she. I did not tell her that I looked special this day due to the acumen of the girls in my office, nor did I mention I didn't actually know how to dress myself beyond jeans and T-shirts.

The inside of the show venue was sweltering. As specific as fashion people get about how things are in their lives—every plant, sock, photo, teacup, shoe rack must be just so—I find they are largely impervious to uncomfortable climes. Probably because in order to look fashion year-round, you have to disregard the whims of the weather and surrender your comfort entirely to your look. It had to have been at least 100 degrees at Rodarte, and the seats were crammed in so tightly that we were practically sitting on top of each other. While I couldn't wait to go back to having my outfit photographed outside, you could look around the room and see people like Anna Wintour and Dasha Zhukova, the pretty Russian editor of art and fashion magazine Garage, wearing her own mint green Miu Miu glitter booties (bitch), perched in their seats like nothing about being in that room was remotely off-putting.

Since my clothes covered most of my body and my remaining exposed surface area was covered in metal jewelry, I was drenched in sweat faster than you could say, "Please do not seat me anywhere near this wet girl." So wearing these odd outfits isn't actually easy.

After the show, we shuffled out and back onto the street where the street-style paparazzi awaited our emergence. In the 80-something-degree air, my sweat began to congeal. I walked s l o w l y past the photographers in hopes that one would stop me. But Beyoncé and Taylor Swift and everyone who was über-famous in fashion had attended the show. So I stood out not at all, even with my Chanel bag, flashy shoes, and Santa jingles. I got photographed only one time postshow from the shoulders up. I felt a little sad about this, because I thought I looked like I was obviously trying (in a not-trying way, of course). And if you obviously try and no one cares, how embarrassing is that? When you cook someone dinner, you want the person to at least say, "Yum." You don't expect a Michelin star, but some acknowledgment is nice.

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Back in the comfort of the air-conditioned hired car, I took out a mirror to make sure my carefully applied street-style makeup hadn't melted off my face. It very well may have, but then somehow dried back on my face in the same arrangement I had applied it. Onward.

The next stop on my journey of attention seeking was the Marchesa show at the Plaza Hotel uptown. This is where you go to see pretty princess dresses made of sparkles that actresses will wear on red carpets during award shows. I got there very early and my feet were starting to kill in the sample Miu Miu shoes, so I set

out to find a place to sit. The easiest option was the restaurant/bar area adjacent to the show space. Harvey Weinstein, the film mogul and husband of Marchesa designer Georgina Chapman, was sitting at a table on the ground floor of the restaurant, suggesting that if one were there to see and be seen, this was the spot. Tables at the Plaza are arranged like they are at a wedding: around a large open space. So it's impossible not to walk into the room without announcing your own presence, basically. I walked into the area, sunglasses still on, and I believe Harvey Weinstein gave me a look up and down as I did so. Apparently, despite the rejection that befell me outside Rodarte, the outfit was still working. Yet here I felt enormously out of my element. I was accustomed to seeing celebrities at parties and fashion shows and movie premieres. Those places are like zoos—you go to the zoo, you know you're going to see a lemur. But seeing a lemur outside the zoo is a whole different experience entirely. Seeing a celebrity in the wild provokes similar emotions, which is probably why I felt incapable of subjecting myself to the scene on the ground floor of the restaurant. Some people thrive in the face of surprise; others (me) freak out and run away. I scurried upstairs as fast as my rapidly blistering feet would take me to the bar. The bar was situated on a balcony overlooking the tables below, reserved for Weinstein and other more fabulous, limelight-occupying people. Now that I was here, with my editor's Chanel purse and everything, I figured this was the perfect time for a $19 glass of white wine. Apparently, at the Plaza, this also buys you an elaborate tray of the world's finest trail mix, which was so fancy I was afraid to eat it. Thanks to all the sweating I did at Rodarte, the wine went to my head right away. As I got tipsy in the middle of this workday and spied on the restaurant below me for Page Six–style happenings, lo, not one, but deux Roitfelds came in. Mesdames Carine Roitfeld, former French Vogue editor, and Her Daughter Julia Restoin Roitfeld. The Roitfelds are like the queen and Kate Middleton of street style—none of their outfits escapes celebration. I could learn from these two, who are so famous on the fashion internet for having great style they don't have to post any of their own photos to keep up interest. These are entirely self-sustaining fashion internet celebrities, and if I was going to learn anything about the art of being stylish, fabulous, and worth photographing, it was from these two.

Carine and Julia arranged themselves at a table at the perimeter of the dance floor–style opening in the furniture. Because they're très European, they positioned their chairs so they were facing not each other but the center of the room, as though this was not a New York City restaurant but a Parisian café where people face out from their tables instead of each other. This would afford them with a view of everyone going by. I admire the French for this—I would hide my judgment behind sunglasses, but they're just honest about how that's what they're doing. Roitfeld lesson number one: act French to curry attention, intrigue, and envy.

The Roitfelds talked cheerfully with their hands waving about like they were just having the best time. They ordered large plates of greens (possibly arugula, for those of you keeping track of what fashion people eat), which arrived practically instantly. Roitfeld lesson number two: engage in animated familial bonding over matching salads.

After each took a few bites of their twin meals, they put down their forks and dashed off to the show. Roitfeld lesson number three: do not finish meal, because you are chic and busy.

I had grown tipsy enough to stop being afraid of eating the trail mix before me and started picking at it. (Included in the assortment were chocolate-covered almonds. This just feels important to note because one never rolls up to a bar, orders a drink, and gets presented with gourmet chocolate-covered almonds.)

When Carine and Julia finished their meals, the model-like pair ran off lithely as if their stilettos and tight skirts were the equivalents of sneakers and track shorts. This stood in stark contrast to my inability to wear heels for a day and debilitatingly constant need to adjust everything I was wearing. Roitfeld lesson number four: do not act like you think about your clothes.

Having finished my glass of meal-priced wine, I slipped back down the stairs and into the show venue. Being tipsy made my feet hurt less, but my entire outfit was bothering me. My metal jewelry had adhered to my skin thanks to my mostly dried sweat, my shoes felt like they were lined with burning coals, and my makeup had congealed into a papier-mâché-like mask. Is this how personal-style bloggers and street-style stars feel in their outfits at the shows all day? I thought. Like they've been mummified?

The funny thing about my outfit is that none of my fashion show friends seemed to notice that I was dressed any differently from my usual Fashion Week wear, which had never before included recognizably designer things, more than one bracelet at a time, bright red lipstick, or shoes covered in glitter. While I felt like I was quite obviously hunting for attention, everyone I interacted with (including people who had known me for quite a while) acted like this was a perfectly normal getup. And maybe it is: we dress up in our daily lives to get photographed all the time, for Facebook and Instagram and Twitter, so the only difference for getting dressed up for Fashion Week, maybe, is that we have to think about how we look more because the resulting images, taken by other people, are out of our control.

After the Marchesa show, I walked slowly out of the venue, hoping I'd stand out more here even though socialite and ex-reality-TV-star Olivia Palermo, a petite and pretty brunette with flawless skin and unfailingly shiny hair who appeared on MTV's The City but was otherwise dubiously employed, was getting into her SUV just feet away from me. My feet hurt so much at this point that I was lumbering. Top street-style people glide—they do not lumber—so I stopped by the curb to rest. As I did, a photographer strode in front of me and motioned as though he wanted to take my picture. I pretended to be surprised so as not to look full of myself and assumed my lame flamingo pose. He motioned for me to scoot farther into the street. So I stepped off the curb and onto the roadway. He motioned again, so I took another step toward the middle of the street. He kept motioning, so I stepped even farther away from the curb. Now I was at the yellow line in the middle of Fifth Avenue with a wall of cars stopped at a red light at the intersection directly before me. The photographer himself was in no safe position either. After trying to photograph me standing up, he decided this was no good, and so he crouched in the middle of the street right between the row of cars and me. Here I was holding a Chanel purse, wearing open-toed boots made of glitter, standing in the middle of Fifth Avenue outside the Plaza Hotel, with nothing between the wall of New York City traffic about to barrel right at me but a photographer putting his life at risk to crouch in the middle of the road to immortalize my ensemble. All I could think about was trotting back to the sidewalk as fast as my designer sparkle booties would take me. "That's great," he said, perfectly comfortable with all of this, snapping away like it was nothing. "Hold it right there! Don't move!" And just as he got his shot, the light turned, and we scampered off the street before the cars could kill us. Once on the curb, we exchanged pleasantries. I learned he was shooting for Marie Claire. My photo made it onto the site, making the discomfort and awkwardness of the day and that $19 drink worth it. And most important, I had pulled off the story.

Once back in my chauffeured town car, I took off my shoes and put my feet up on the backseat. I peeled off my choker and bangles and put my hair up. My day of street-styling was over, and I was headed back to my office, feet afire with pain.

The attention was addictive, I will admit. It's the kind of validating rush you might get dancing all sexy-like at a concert or a club, and you wind up on a pedestal or the jumbotron, and you feel as though the crowd surrounding you is paying homage to your incredible cool hotness. But ultimately, once you're on that jumbotron you have to keep up appearances, otherwise you're out. And keeping up appearances is fucking exhausting. I could never be the kind of person who could: (1) dress this stylishly every day, (2) afford to dress this stylishly every day (the sum of my bag and shoes had to have been around $6,000), and (3) tolerate the discomfort of dressing like this every day. I concluded I was better off wearing my own off-trend $40 jeans and hoodie, hidden behind my cubicle half-wall or my seat in the very last row at a fashion show.

Being the invisible kind of blogger has its perks, one of them being blister-free feet.

I had to put on my shoes to get from the car to the building, but once I got in the elevator, my feet hurt so much that I couldn't take it. And so I did something that I have vowed, after nights out at too many nightclubs full of drunk women, never to do: I took off my shoes in public. Standing on the cold floor of the elevator was divine. Once to my floor, I limped several steps down the hallway toward my desk before bumping into Diana.

"Jesus Christ, dude," she said, slightly horrified by how I'd washed ashore after my day.

"I can't walk," I said. "Can you call in a walker for me?"

"Definitely not till after Fashion Week," she said, coming over to relieve me of the shoes, looking concerned but mostly amused as I hobbled back to my desk. I felt like the girl clawing her way out of the TV in The Ring: scary, gross-looking, covered in well grime, but also powerful. It topped dragging myself out of my old Jewcy.com job with a far worse beaten-down feeling years ago. And it made me incredibly thankful to have a job that involves sitting at a desk in jeans and flats most of the time instead of having to parade about in clothing that should come with a gym membership.

A stylist and/or personal-style blogger and/or person with eight billion Instagram followers I would never be, that much was certain. Writing about them, however, was a sheer delight. And now that I knew what they were up against every day, I could approach it with newfound empathy. Which, theoretically, should help me get through Fashion Week.

Users Review

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