

AUSTIN HUMMELL

WHAT NOT TO WEAR

Your heart on a sleeve. A frown at Yuletide. Spandex, anytime. The clothes you have worn since you first got the job as crisis counselor twelve years ago. Your friends try to tell you the square-toed boot is dead, but you just shrug your frumpy sweater and tuck your unbrushed hair behind your ear. Which is what passes for styling now that you have three kids and just enough time to glance into the mirror with your face turned to your good side. It's true. The Royal Ball has come and gone. There's a guy sitting in a recliner who says you look good in anything, which is sweet but no help at all. What you need is a godmother, or better yet a godmother's wand. Or best yet a five-thousand-dollar credit line, a bossy flat mate, and a friend who loves cashmere as much as it is possible to love cashmere. So ok, you agree to lose the lab coat, the old school hip-hop jersey, the whole downscale thrift store look. Denial is what got you in the chair. It'll take a little silver ballet flat to get you out. You dress for the job you want, not the job you have. You dress for the cocktail you'd like to drink after. And then maybe one night before midnight

it happens. Again. The change you live your life for.
The makeover. The Clean House. The period
after the period. Childbirth.
The pause. It's what men will never get
because it's not in their blood. You forgive them
when for two weekends in March they sit
in front of a sport they call the Big Dance.
You smile when the spit flies from their lips
as they tell you about the Cinderella team
from the east. Like it's their story,
the sweet, helpless things. The very boys
you or someone like you brought into this world
by dressing like this, and then undressing.