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A Bewildering Fashion

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A Bewildering Fashion

Sean Bruce

I will be the first to admit I know very little about fashion. I couldn't tell you what color to wear in what season, my wardrobe consists mainly of whatever inhabits the clearance racks at Target or Walmart, and I have no ability to discern the difference between Prada or Gucci. So when my girlfriend suggests that I visit the mall and pick up some new clothes, since (in her words) my outfits look like the products of a color-blind mental patient, I am understandably apprehensive. Nevertheless armed with a few helpful suggestions and what little fashion knowledge I possess, I made my journey into the temple to materialism known as the mall.

Now I have visited the mall before, but never before had I gone for the specific purpose of purchasing clothes. After wandering around, checking out the usual stores, by which I mean the ones I had religiously avoided in the past, I found my self at an Abercrombie & Fitch. I knew a little bit about A&E, most specifically that it seems to cater primarily to skinny teenagers, but I was mystified at the exact nature of the interior. The store front was designed to look like a tropical beach house while at the same time obscuring the interior. There were no clothes evident or signs describing various sales. Even the name of the store was difficult to discern, requiring a few moments of scrutiny before becoming evident. As I had yet to find articles of clothing I thought suitable, ie. costing less than a fortune, I decided to try my luck with this ambiguous establishment. Little did I know that I was walking into an environment very different from my usual state of being.

Upon entering the store I was immediately assaulted by a barrage of sensory input. A rhythmic pounding dance beat blared at a volume capable of interrupting human thought. The lights were dim, with occasional spotlights to highlight some new trend. Worst of all, various colognes and perfumes, whose omnipresence could only be explained by usage of the ventilation system, mingled to form an eye-stinging, nose burning concoction. After a few moments wading through the near-visible odor, attempting to ignore the mind-numbing vibrations of the nearest sub-woofer, avoiding the retina-searing spotlights, and thinking in too many hyphens, I eventually worked my way over to the men's section. The memory of what follows is a blurred stream of random images and thoughts, as my mind begins to succumb to its surroundings. I remember speaking to some sort of employee who was inured to the challenges of his profession through some

arcane, inexplicable means. Following that conversation in which I believe I received some advice, I recall pondering the nature of certain furnishings. There were a number of comfortable chairs and couches located in random parts of the store, apparently for the purpose of allowing customers to rest and enjoy the atmosphere, an idea that confounds me to this day. My last cohesive memory of the event is my attempt to decide between two nearly identical shirts with only slight variations in pattern. I don't recall why, but I was convinced that I had to choose just one.

The next thing I remember is sitting in the mall food court. I had not purchased any food, and I appeared to be simply sitting, staring at a nearby Sbarro. Judging from the looks I was getting from the cashier there, I must have been staring for quite some time. I then realized, much to my chagrin, that I had apparently bought three shirts, a pair of jeans, and something I believe is called a cardigan, at some point while I was in the A&E. I considered going back and returning the roughly one hundred and thirty dollar purchase, but lost heart and decided to cut my losses. I was pretty sure that if I went back I would wake up in Tijuana next to a pile consisting of my weight in clothes. I left the mall in the hopes that I would never, or at least for a few months, have to return. Sadly, the clothes I picked out in my fragrance-induced euphoric state were evidently not up to snuff. With renewed determination and the assistance of my girlfriend, who by this point must have given up any belief in my competence, I returned to the mall to try again. But that, I'm afraid, is another story.

Sean Bruce is a senior in history. Utilizing this highly unemployable degree, he hopes to one day rise to the position of professor, despite a paygrade comparable to that of the average bum. He enjoys the finer points of English literature, especially authors who don't take themselves too seriously and tend to exaggerate a bit for the point of a better story.