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Angora

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Angora

Emily wanted angora as a gag. You know, as a gag gift for her boyfriend, a big Ed Wood fan. She bought him the Ed Wood collection. The one with *Plan Nine from Outer Space*, *Bride of the Monster*, and the ever-classic *Glen or Glenda*—all housed in a love-ly, portable, pink angora-sheathed case. Emily wanted a sweater to go with the video tape set, a pink angora sweater. I asked her if she bought him a blond wig. She'd considered it.

It was two days before X-mas; I had nothing to do. Shooting on my film was delayed. I was out of film. My mom was buying me more as a gift for the holidays. It's rather expensive. Emily appears in my latest project...but that's beside the point, really. I had nothing to do, two days before X-mas, so I went with Emily to Unique Thrift to shop for angora. Now this Unique is not as unique as the Unique on Lorain, just closer. But we had to travel on foot so we went to the Unique on Fulton. The Unique on Lorain was where Emily had purchased the blue overcoat she wore that afternoon. The purple lining was torn slightly, and a button was lost one time when we went out for coffee. Still it was rather stylish. Chic even. Framed her darling hips well. She looked like Faye Dunaway with that coat on. Especially with a black beret on her head. God, I really wanted to film her in that hat and coat, but I guess that's beside the point too.

Walking to Unique Thrift was no pleasure cruise. It was rainy. It was windy. Cleveland December weather totally. My fucking glasses fogged up as we trudged on towards Unique. Emily whined about my lack of a car.

"What—and miss this sure to be treasured experience?" was my reply.

Unique Thrift. I would start with a close-up of one sandblock and then slowly draw back to reveal the whole of the graffiti-plastered bland, beige building with its smudged and cracked showroom windows. Maybe I'll make this the site of my next project. Right now, as you know, I'm filming at the nearby Waffle House. Actually I'm doing something entitled *Twenty-Four Hours at the Waffle House*. It may end up being more like a structuralist film than a pseudo-documentary. I'm not sure yet.

Help Wanted. The sign would be my next shot. It was a big, red two-sided beast with white lettering which faced Fulton Road. I could never work at Unique Thrift. Could I ever put on a hundred extra pounds, emasculate myself, and don a blue smock? I might not have to wear the smock. Some of the women at Unique wore smocks; some didn't. I wanted to ask, how did they decide?

Unique divides its clothes first into gender, then into type, then into color. Emily raced to the female, sweater, pink section. She looked at several sweaters. Nothing woolen would do. Nothing knitted either. She, we, wanted angora, only angora. The many shades of pink thrilled me. I'd never seen so many different subtleties in color. Bubble gum pink. Carnation pink. Strawberry Quick pink. Pepto Bismo pink. On and on and on.

She finally settled on an angora-like sweater—fuck it, the genuine article absolutely could not be found—with a ribbon-like collar. I mean ribbon-like in that the collar of the sweater matched the X-mas ribbons Pops likes to tie to the shutters. "Perfect," she purred. "How much," I asked. Two dollars. Emily smiled; it was half off day.

She looked for skirts for herself. I admired the velvet paintings of conquistadors stuck to the pegboard walls. Toys were strewn across the tops of the clothes racks. Most

of them were dirty and broken. Some were relics from my childhood—the Fisher-Price little people house with all the front sticker stripped away. Guess its next owner will need to re-side it. I couldn't resist ringing the little doorbell as I passed. The toys were systematically scooped-up and dumped into a grocery cart by a Nice and Easy woman—the straps of the blue smock stretched tight around her waist. She was steadily advancing towards us. I nudged Emily, but she was completely entranced by a long, olive skirt. "Aw ya don't have ta move," the woman assured me, "This cart aw's full." I smiled, and so did she.

"What do you think?" asked Emily, holding the olive skirt against her long, perfect for celluloid legs.

"Perfect for your part, love. Very Brenda-esque." Brenda is her character's name in *Twenty-Four Hours at the Waffle House*. I did say it was only a pseudo-documentary. You have to use actors these days.

"What's Brenda-esque?"

"The height of fashion, love." Brenda-esque is simply Emily-esque. I modeled the character after her. Emily-esque is singularity. Consider that day's wardrobe—navy blue jeans with red-orange stitching; a black long-sleeved undershirt with holes cut in the cuffs so that her thumbs fit through—like Kate Hepburn's cuffs in *The Lion in Winter*—and a gray v-neck t-shirt pulled over the black undershirt; Doc Marten boots; and green glitter around her green eyes. I ran my fingers along the collar of the gray v-neck, "Exposing a little flesh, eh."

"Are you bored?" she asked, "Most men are bored by shopping. I know Tod is."

"I'm never bored when in the company of someone truly fascinating."

"Oh, Brent," she cried and threw one arm around my waist as she pulled another skirt off the rack.

I was bored. Truly, really, madly. At least in the women's section. So I ventured to men's, briefly pausing by the sweater racks. Nothing great there. As I was admiring the striped and paisley ties, an old man, reeking of gin and peppermint, pushed his way past me—bastard! I finally found the hat rack. I love hats. Fedoras. Homburgs. Berets. Whatever. This great old hat, kind of Fred Norton like, hung on the rack. But there was a large dusty footprint on the brim. I tried to wipe off the tread marks and failed.

As I headed towards the sports coats, a couple blocked me. They were searching for polo shirts. "The ones with the alligators on them," said the woman. She was rifling through shirts on the rack. The man was leaning against the rack and talking to her. "Now inner city McDonald's ain't of the same quality as suburban McDonald's, you see. At an inner city McDonald's they don't give two fucks about the customer. The cheese drips off the burgers, or it's hardly melted at all. You find your pickles under the patty. Now the suburban McDonald's, they treat you right. The inner city ones don't give a fuck about quality." That's going in the film.

Against one wall was a stack of puzzles and board games. That's where I found it. The buried treasure. A genuine *Battlestar Galactica* colorform set. I had to have it. Dirk Benedict. Lorne Green before Alpo. Thrill me. Chill me. Fulfill me. And only fifty cents according to the ink-filled strip of masking tape on the cover. And it was half off day.

"I told you to put it down. You can't have it," said a woman who looked like

leggy Pop. Her fingers, which gripped the steering bar of a grocery cart full of clothes, were stained tobacco yellow.

"But I wan' it. Why can' I have it?" asked the kid in the striped shirt—oatmeal flakes around his lips jumped with the words. He grabbed Mommy by one leg and pressed a Goofy puzzle against her thigh.

"That's not what we're here for. Put it back. I can't afford it."

The kid cried and stomped his feet against the white, easily-scuffed squares. I put back the colorform set. Some of the stickers were probably missing. It wouldn't be worth anything without Starbucks.

I went back to Emily.

She had found a corduroy skirt and a blue plaid pair of pants. She would try the pants on first thing when we got back to her house and keep them on the rest of the day.

"Aren't you getting anything?" she asked.

"I found a pretty groovy hat, but it was damaged." I only had two dollars left. I'm a fucking starving artist. I wanted paper at this moment, so I could write the McDonald's conversation down. Emily didn't have any in her purse. Fucking bad stroke of luck.

We strolled to the register. I held the pseudo-angora sweater as Emily peered into a glass display case full of old war medals and costume jewelry. I yawned. She spent six dollars in all. The toothless dame in the Buffalo Bills sweatshirt behind the register didn't even wish us Season's Greetings.

"Where to next, love?" I asked as we exited.

"I don't know. Why don't we just go to the Donut Connection?"

So we did.

The only other person under sixty in the place was a boy of about seven. His grandparents brought him to the Donut Connection as a treat. Quite the treat. Still he seemed to enjoy himself as he spun on the orange-capped stool and devoured a white-frosted donut with extra sprinkles. It was Christmas.

All the old people looked like TV truck drivers. Even the women. They all smoked, drank their coffee with heavy amounts of cream and sugar, wore ballcaps and windbreakers, and swore passionately while relating their vulgar adventures.

Emily and I chatted quietly about the project. She smoked an L&M. I told her that X-mas shopping was a drag. "More of a pain than it's worth," she said.

One of the truck drivers barked, "I think I'll go down to Unique and buy my wife a present." Har, har, har, they all went. Emily laughed. And so did I. If only the Donut Connection were open twenty-four hours.

—Paul Durica '00