

**Lily**  
By Matt Buchanan

You probably think I lead a pretty glamorous life and I guess you're right. It's not too bad, getting to wear all the latest styles, always the pinnacle of haute couture. But don't envy me so easily. Sure, my clothes are always new, always expensive. But I never have any *say* in what I wear. Other people always choose my outfits, and some of them have very strange taste. Last Christmas I had to wear this hideous red and purple thing with what looked like tinsel streamers on the shoulders. And how would you like being dressed and undressed by strangers all the time? And it's not like they treat you with respect. Once they took all my clothes and left me there, totally naked, for almost an entire day. Right in the window! Fortunately I'm not anatomically correct or somebody would have been arrested. But the *shame*. Actually, I think it's worse because I'm not anatomically correct. Somehow all that smooth, featureless plastic feels even *more* naked. That was probably the most mortifying day of my life, unless it was the time they were having a sale in Menswear and some genius decided to borrow me. They took my regular hair, gave me a bad male wig, and put me in a suit. *What* a disaster! I may not have all the bits and pieces, but I *do* have a shape. Wig or no wig, I do *not* look like a man! At least it was just guys shopping over there and they mostly don't notice anything.

What's even worse is I can't shut my eyes. People watching is fine, and I do have a great view from my window on Main Street, but haven't you ever *not* wanted to look at something? Something disgusting or upsetting? And *you* can look away. You can shut your eyes and pretend it's not there. Or even just something embarrassing. Like, okay—most of the time it's bright enough in my window and people can see right in, but during morning rush hour when the sun slants directly on my glass my window looks like a mirror from the outside. And people *use* it like one. Here's a news flash for you: My window may look like a mirror to you, but from my side it's still a window. I do *not* need to see you picking spinach quiche from your teeth or checking to see if your tongue is coated. It's embarrassing! I don't really mind people checking their hair, and sometimes it's kind of funny to watch guys slow down to check their full-body profile, but it's also kind of pathetic. Still, you do meet some nice people.

I met Lily about seven years ago. It was around New Year's and I was wearing a really gorgeous ball gown. It was pale peach silk, feathery light, and cut a little like those "flapper" dresses they used to wear during Prohibition—only more formal. It was just getting dark and this really, really old lady stopped outside my window. She was a little stooped and a little chubby, with sweet snow-white curls poking out of a knit hat and bright little button eyes. She was wearing a knit shawl over a wooly coat that had been mended several times and carrying a clumpy purse and a mesh shopping bag.

She stood and gazed at me for a long time. Well, that's nothing new—people do it all the time, and it *was* a beautiful gown. Then I saw that she had tears in her eyes. Slowly her arms came up until she looked like she was holding a dancing partner. Her stoop seemed to vanish, and she began to sway gracefully to music I couldn't hear.