

Tales of a Sexy Vampire

this is rare. I see the store as a great place to look for fishnet stockings and high heels. The catalog contains everything from swimwear to casual wear to slinky wear, sexy shoes, hooker wigs, and even silicone boobs. The silicone boobs are worth checking out as they are quite realistic when worn with their special bra. You will not be disappointed with these boobs.

Frederick's mail deliveries usually take about 2 weeks when placing an order over the phone with a credit card. The company ships merchandise via first-class mail in plain, opaque plastic bags. I have found Frederick's to be a bit costly, especially with shipping and sales tax tacked on, but this is the price you pay for shop-at-home convenience. Let me tell you that in many cases, it isn't worth it. You can get similar styles of clothing at your local mall stores for much less. Some people like to rave about the "quality merchandise" they've received from Frederick's, but I've purchased enough crap from them to prove otherwise. Spend your money elsewhere.

J.C. Penney also has a separate mail-order service as well as a walk-in department store. Again, like Frederick's, the catalog is different from the merchandise sold in the store. If you want a good selection of decent clothes and accessories, the catalog offers that as well as decent prices. Breast forms are also sold through their catalog, although they are quite expensive. To order merchandise, simply call them and, within one week, your merchandise will be shipped to your nearest J.C. Penney or your home address.

If you choose to ship to the store, you will be contacted via phone when your order arrives. You can see the advantage of shipping merchandise to the store (to prevent your unsuspecting wife or girlfriend from finding out you're a crossdresser!). The only problem is when you have to pick the merchandise up. The clerk opens the box or boxes in front of you to show you the merchandise. Some men might feel awkward being shown a pair of size 12 heels that they had purchased for themselves. Even more frustrating is when the merchandise doesn't fit and you have to bring the stuff back to the store for credit or cash back. You will have to fill out a card or be asked what was wrong with the merchandise by the clerk. Just keep a straight face, girls, and maintain your "it was for my wife and she just didn't like it" story. I've done this several times with success.

Contempo Casuals, Merry Go Round, and T.J. Maxx are three stores that cater to the teeny-bopper to early 20's crowd. If you want clothes that will be "in" with teenagers (assuming you are around this age), these are the places to shop. These stores also carry party dresses, jackets, cheap jewelry, and knick-knacks. I guarantee that if you bring \$20 with you, you will be able to buy a cute outfit and matching earrings. If you walk in with \$50, you will be able to buy everything you'll need for one great weekend of fun: matching spandex top and bottom, earrings, bracelets, necklace, handbag, and shoes. You might even be able to fit a matching denim jacket into your budget. The point is these places are really inexpensive, have cute clothes (not elegant in any way, but nice enough to wear a few times), and can be found in any large mall.

A source of fetishistic (S&M, baby-doll, etc.) custom-made clothing is Transformation Mail-Order, P.O. Box 459, Orange, CA 92666, (714) 775-0238. These folks publish a "Transvestite" catalog for \$22.50 (I know; it's very expensive) that contains many unique corset dresses and leatherwear at sky-high prices.

You can find many of the nonfetishistic dress styles in the catalog for much, much cheaper if you shop in a regular department or chain store, such as Lane Bryant, unless you are an extremely out-of-the-ordinary size and cannot find any clothing to fit you in those stores. In this day and age, this is extremely unlikely. The catalog gives the closeted crossdresser an opportunity to shop at home and never leave his house. This, in itself, may be worth it for some people, but at \$225 to \$500 per dress, I'm sure these girls will come out of the closet and into their nearest malls in no time! My advice to the full-figured crossdressers is to buy your clothing from Lane Bryant and have a professional tailor alter the clothing to fit you nicely.

Mail-order can literally be a drag in many ways. For one thing, you have to take the manufacturer's word on sizes. The problem is "medium" to one manufacturer (Compagnie International Express, The Gap) is "large" to another (Frederick's, Contempo Casuals, G+G) and "small" to yet another (Newport News, Lane Bryant). The only way you could determine whether a piece of clothing fits you properly is to order it and try it on. If it doesn't fit, you have to go through the hassle of returning it. You've wasted shipping charges to and from the

mail-order company and, more importantly, your time and patience.

Another big minus with mail-order is receiving factory seconds, that is, clothes that look obviously worn by a previous customer. There is no way you can guarantee getting fresh merchandise via mail-order. Oftentimes, you have to rely on the company's good name to provide you with fresh goods. I have received factory seconds from such "reputable" mail-order places as Frederick's of Hollywood (e.g. a wig that was obviously used and reused one too many times). I promptly returned the unwanted item for an exchange. I didn't tolerate such foolish service and you shouldn't, either. Mail-order places charge you a premium for merchandise. Take advantage of the return policy if you're not satisfied. My dissatisfaction cost me my time and patience. Thankfully, Frederick's had agreed to pay for return shipping on the defective wig when I had complained to one of their representatives over the phone.

Wigs

Should you wear your hair long or short? A big question and one that depends entirely upon your own personal preferences and what looks best on you. Some women look awful with short hair. Other women don't maintain good personal hygiene and let their long hair collect dirt, dust, and critters. As a crossdresser, you'll most likely wear a wig. I suggest trying out both long and short wigs at a wig shop. Get the informed opinion of the wig shop dealer as to what styles look best on you. Have the dealer select a couple of long and short styles for you to try on.

If you don't feel like spending an inordinate amount of time in a wig shop, then you'll have to do it the hard way. Go out and buy copies of *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, and whatever fashion and beauty magazines you can find and study those women's faces that match your own. See what styles these women are wearing and choose a couple that are appealing to you. Oftentimes, a model will be wearing a wig in a photo layout. Take the picture(s) to the wig shop and ask the dealer to pick out wigs that resemble the wigs in the photos. You'll still have to try them on, but you'll be saving both you and the dealer some time by being better prepared.

Proper maintenance of your wigs is absolutely essential for the best look. Treat your wigs as if they're your very own hair. Don't let them collect

dirt or dust. Wash them after every use to remove dirt, dust, hairspray, etc. Use a specially-formulated wig shampoo, *not hand soap or laundry detergent*, in lukewarm to cold water to maintain the curls or waves in the wig. Hang the wet wigs on large spray paint cans to air dry. Place your dry wigs on wig stands, on head mannequins, or in big hat boxes away from direct sunlight. Treat your wigs with a revitalizer spray to rejuvenate the curls or waves in them.

René of Paris, 15551 Cabrito Road, Van Nuys, CA 91406, 1-800-528-5678, has one of the largest selections of wigs in the world. There are many, many styles to fit every mood and look. You will not be disappointed when you browse through their excellent color catalog. René also publishes an alternate catalog that shows club-style wigs. Their wigs can be had for as little as \$75 to as high as \$400, with the average price somewhere around \$125. These wigs are the very best synthetic wigs around. Be forewarned, though. If you are not affiliated with a hair salon or do not have a cosmetology license, you will not be able to order any of the wigs! You will not even be allowed to obtain the catalog except through nefarious means or from a crossdressing boutique. The 800 number is basically the factory itself, which offers salons and licensed cosmetologists wholesale prices. The prices are then marked up by your friendly neighborhood crossdressing boutique.

The best way to obtain the catalog is to go to a hair salon that sells wigs and order it through the salon. Depending upon how interested the salon is in making a profit off of you, there may be a slight to tremendous markup (25% to 300%) on each wig the salon orders on your behalf. When your wig arrives, you will receive a copy of the catalog. If you have reservations about ordering a wig through a salon, place your order around Halloween time and tell the salon people that the wig is for a Halloween party. Make sure you order your wig well in advance of Halloween, though, as I am sure René gets swamped with orders around that time.

I have four René of Paris wigs: Celine, Vanessa, Nadia, and Felicia. Celine is a long wig and has a high realism factor because of its quality hair fibers that are very soft to the touch. You will fool many people into thinking your wig hair is real. The hairs are attached to a skin cap that looks very much like a scalp. Vanessa is a short wig and has less real hair than Celine. Its hairs are not as soft to the touch, but

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for the style it is, it is very good. Nadia is a long wig with slightly wavy hair fibers and relies on your front bangs to complete its look. It is classified as a 3/4-style wig, the type that Marina Sirtis (Deanna Troi) wears on Star Trek.

Felicia is one of the most expensive wigs in the catalog, but it is well worth it. The trademark of this gorgeous wig is its "Interweave" style that permits you to blend in some of your own hair with the wig for extra realism. The wig has a hairline mesh opening up front to allow you to pull your bangs through, so the length of your own hair can affect the style somewhat. Little clip combs on the top and sides keep the wig securely in place. It is a long wig reaching past the middle of my back and has very realistic hair fibers. Some of the hair fibers fall out a bit too easily, though, so don't tug at the hair or brush it out too much.

My wife purchased two wigs from René of Paris: Caprice and Alexandra. Both are short but stylish cuts with very realistic necklines. There is a hard piece at the nape of each wig that clings onto your own nape for added realism. Some people have sworn to the realism of her wigs. We are very pleased with all of our René purchases. This is absolutely the very best mail-order wig company we have come across.

Paula Young, P.O. Box 483, Brockton, MA 02403, 1-800-343-9695, offers a variety of wig styles for older women. A few of the wigs can work on women in their 20's, but, on the whole, the catalog caters to the upper-30's and beyond woman. The first catalog you will receive will be accompanied by a "discount coupon" that will give you between \$30 to \$50 off of your first wig depending upon what style you buy. The wigs in the catalog range from \$79 to \$119. Some of the cheaper and more plain styles will be under \$30, but will not look sexy. A follow-up postcard tells you to hurry and meet the deadline for your wig discount.

So far, the Paula Young offer looks like a great deal, huh? Until you find out that the next catalog you receive after the expiration date will contain the same wigs with much lower prices, the original prices minus the discount coupon the company strongly urged you to use by the deadline. What a gimmick! The catalog does have its uses, though. You can find out what your headsize is by carefully following the instructions in the catalog.

A few wigs stand out above the rest: Brittany is a long, wavy wig, Premiere is a short, wavy wig

where the hair is styled upwards, and Cabaret is a nice wig that will nicely frame almost any face. And, there is a line of wigs by Christine Jordan with wigs that supposedly fit every head size. Unfortunately, these wigs don't look very sexy. They're made for realism, not sexiness. The color chart included in the catalog is very useful. A large selection of colors is available for each wig. If you want a couple of quick laughs, read the testimonials of some of the happy customers featured in each catalog.

Frederick's of Hollywood sells a number of decent wigs for around \$75 each. All are long styles and are very sexy. I am happy with one of my purchases, but I had to go through a bit of hell to obtain satisfaction. The colors in the catalog are not accurate representations of the actual colors of the wigs themselves. I initially ordered a light brown color, which turned out to be too light. I then called for an exchange for a dark auburn wig. Frederick's accidentally sent me a flame red wig instead! Argh!!! I sent back the flame red wig and received a ratty-looking dark auburn wig. Several days later, I was sent a second dark auburn wig and was mistakenly charged for the wig again (I had only ordered one). I cleared up this mess with Frederick's and sent back the ratty-looking wig for a refund. It took a little more than one month to get the right wig. Like I said, I am happy with my purchase, but I had to go through a bit of hell to be happy. Request a catalog, look it over, and study it before you buy anything.

Jewelry

Essential for any nights out on the town is jewelry: rings, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, etc. You can never have too many trinkets. Women love to buy their girlfriends cheap \$5 or \$10 trinkets as gifts. You need to buy yourself some of these trinkets. The trick is to know what and where to buy. Go to the mall chain outlets, such as Afterthoughts, Claire's Boutique, and Accessories Place. Some cheap clothing stores, such as Joyce Leslie and Contempo Casuals, also carry trinkets.

These places usually advertise some special deal, such as buy one for \$5 or two for \$8. You're usually not limited to buying two of the same item, so shop away! Get both gold and silver trinkets. Buy several pairs of earrings, some finger rings, an ankle bracelet, a wrist bracelet, a watch, a couple of necklaces, and a couple of belts. Ask a pretty salesgirl (who's wearing nice jewelry) if you need

help. Tell them the gifts are for your girlfriend and you'd like them to look clubby, since you're taking her out for her birthday or something. The salesgirl will help pick out something that suits her own tastes, which will hopefully suit yours.

Don't limit yourself to clip-on earrings! To wear real earrings, make sure the base that rests against the ear is reasonably large (at least 1/4"). Use a pair of flat pliers to pry off the pin of the earring. The base should now be relatively flat. File the metal surface smooth. Apply a drop of Krazy Glue (or 5-Second Nail Glue) on the base and carefully position it onto your earlobe. Hold for 15 seconds, pressing the base into your ear. After 15 seconds, add another drop to the base at the top edge that meets the flesh of your ear. This is added insurance that the earring will not fall off. Depending upon how big your earrings are (I love big dangling hoops), the earrings should stay on for many, many hours. I've successfully worn 4" hoops overnight using the Krazy Glue method. Clip-on earrings just don't rest on your ear and dangle in the same way that real earrings do, so the Krazy Glue method approximates wearing real earrings with amazing accuracy. Keep your Krazy Glue with you when you go out just in case you sweat a lot and your earrings start peeling off your earlobes. Don't use too much glue because a buildup of it will give your crusty earlobes!

Perfume

Ahh, perfume... that heavenly scent that can drive men wild. If you want to drive men, lesbians, and your lover wild, you'll have to choose the right scent for your body. The best way to find out if a perfume smells good on you is to try it on yourself. The way I wear perfume (actually, eau de toilette) is a double spray under each armpit, a shot on my upper back, and a little behind my ears and on top of my wig (to kill the smell of the hairspray). After I get my whole outfit on, I spray a little bit on my front and back and around my crotch (woo hoo!) for full guidette effect.

You should study some of the best-looking women you see in clubs, find ones that match your body type, and find out what perfumes they are wearing. All you really have to do is walk up to them and ask them. Some women may think you are hitting on them. Hey, it's not that bad of an opening line! It's better than what a lot of guidoes say to attract guidettes. Once you have a list of three or four perfumes, go visit your friendly neighborhood

mall and ask to sample each perfume. Tell the saleslady it's for your girlfriend. First, see what the perfume smells like on a piece of paper or cardboard. You will find that perfume requires sweat in order to smell the way it's supposed to. Spray a little on your wrist and let it sit for a minute. Take a whiff. Sample the other perfumes. Purchase your favorite one or two.

My favorite perfumes are Gaultier and Poison. I have seen some drop-dead gorgeous girls wear these perfumes, so I knew I had to adopt them for myself. Gaultier is the ultimate "vanilla" scent. Poison has a sweet and fruity quality that appeals to many young guidoes and guidettes. As a man, I wear Polo, which is also sweet and fruity for a man's cologne. Musks don't appeal to me. Only soft, sweet, and fruity perfumes interest me. Mackie is another favorite of mine as well as Red and Organza. Probably the best place to buy perfume is from a large department store. Visit your local mall at the start of each season or the moment you see an ad for a brand new perfume on television. What you want to do is buy your perfume from the store and get samples of other perfumes with your purchase. These samples are free and are supposed to lure you into buying more perfume.

If you are lucky, there will be some samples of perfumes you like. It's always neat to buy a certain perfume and get samples of the very same perfume. Paying a few dollars more for your bottle of perfume in a department store should, at least, get you plenty of free samples. Purchasing your perfume from a street vendor or your local drugstore or chain discount store will not bring you the same benefits as a department store, however, if you have no interest in getting free perfume samples, by all means get your perfume at a Ross Dress-for-Less or a Filene's Basement. It's the same exact product for less money.

Shoes

In general, the numbers for women's shoe sizes are 1 to 2 higher than the equivalent men's sizes. In other words, if you wear a men's 8 with a tad bit of room to spare, then you can snugly fit a women's 9 in dress shoes (high-heeled pumps) and 9-1/2 in sneakers and casual shoes. For footwear, try getting a size 10. You really have to try on any pair of shoes in question, though, since you may fit a size 9 from one manufacturer, but not a size 9 from another manufacturer.