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Standing in the Reception Line at the Wedding of My Ex-Wife

James Plath



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STANDING IN THE RECEPTION LINE AT THE WEDDING
OF MY EX-WIFE

I remember last week in a warehouse
style department store—the one
where shoppers squeeze through
jean-tight aisles and clerks
seem always on coffee
breaks—a woman turned to me
smoothing a half-buttoned designer
blouse that was tagged *slightly irregular*

“Does my bra show through?”
she asked

And without hesitation *I told her*

“Yes”

As though we had once made love
in the back of her father’s immaculate
Buick, as though I had grown quite used to
shaving in the shadows of her drying
nylons, and chatting like ten-year
pinochle partners we could leave the
lingerie behind us, stroll down the aisle
lined with panty shields, deodorant pads
and colored mouthwash.

I turned away. In the record department
a couple was locked in a Ken and Barbie
embrace, the two of them spinning, oblivious
to the pre-recorded cordial voice that
abruptly invited all shoppers to gather
in the garden section, for a special on
pink plastic flamingos.

She decided not to take the blouse
and together we walked toward the smell
of peat moss, hearts pumping like blue strobes.
For fifteen minutes we shifted the weight
from foot to foot in a line where, somehow,
total strangers had managed to
speak.

Certainly something will come to mind.