

The Furs Were Flying



Talking shop—and shearing—with Houston’s über-socialite.

had brought Camilla along for the weekend. When I couldn’t recall seeing a certain jugged heir to the throne and his horse-faced consort splashing around the public pool, I realized that she was talking about Balmoral, Queen Victoria’s “dear paradise in the Highlands,” not Balmorhea, “the only cold, wet one in West Texas not in a six-pack.”

When I was introduced to Becca, I blurted out the one fact I then knew about her: She lives in a house with thirteen powder rooms and two bedrooms. Before I could ask if she ran a potty-training academy, the effervescent Harlingen girl, proud of her working-class roots, who devoured *Vogue* while her mother shopped because they couldn’t afford the 95 cents it cost back then, burst out, “You *must* come and see them!”

I must, indeed.

Now, you might expect a glamorous socialite to be downright adorable, but you wouldn’t necessarily think she’d immediately feel like a best girlfriend. BCT was both. Still, I was certain that the impulsively generous invitation would be rescinded once Texas’s queen of haute couture, voted one of Houston’s best dressed and such a clotheshorse that *Harper’s Bazaar* featured her in an article on “Couture’s Big Spenders,” realized that I was a known wearer of shoes the shape and style of pinto bean. (Women are divided into two distinct, frequently hostile camps: those who wear sensible, comfortable, blunt-nosed shoes and those who wedge into shoes so lethally pointed that cockroaches flee in fright.)

So I’m surprised when, a few days later, an e-mail arrives | CONTINUED ON PAGE TTK

There is a world where the kings of small African countries send cases of Dom Pérignon as hostess gifts, where Marc Anthony entertains at your parties, where former presidents are “darling” where visits to Buckingham Palace number in the double digits, where museums ask to borrow your clothes, and where the glass is always half full. Of Dom Pérignon. Welcome to Planet Thrash, the world of über-Houston socialite Becca Cason Thrash. ¶ So how the h-e-double-hockey-sticks did the Bargain Queen, Empress of Target/Ross/T. J. Maxx, land on the planet for a couple of days? Just how did the über-socialite meet the über-gooper? ¶ It started with a chance encounter. I was part of a delighted group listening to the irrepressible BCT bubble on about how, though she’d been to Buckingham Palace ten times, she’d only recently visited Balmorhea. *Quelle surprise* to learn that the glitterati and I vacationed at the same state park! I was about to ask if her party had selected the deluxe trailer hookup or if they’d splurged on a room at the cute motel right there on the park grounds when Becca mentioned that Charles

CASH! THRASH! BASH! “Having money calms your nerves,” Becca says.

The Furs Were Flying

CONTINUED FROM PAGE TK

from Becca detailing the “costume change requirements” for my visit. Among them are a “luncheon suit,” “casual cocktail,” and “cocktail or festive.” Hmmm. I know that women are issued luncheon suits when they join the Republican party, but I don’t have time for that. As for the rest, I just hope that enough cocktails will be involved that the glitterati won’t notice my Targetwear. The one item I’m certain I must acquire, though, is a pair of those needle-nosed cockroach killers.

Which is why I’m hobbling when I follow the

house manager into Becca’s guest house a week later. Once he leaves, I investigate. I discover two toilets, side by side, and think, “How companionable. The rich really are different.” Then I say, “Whoa, I’m no rube. I lived in France for almost a year. I know a bidet when I see one.” What I don’t know is not to lean over and turn the damn thing on. After spritzing myself in the face, I remember that I was *une domestique* in France and the only waterworks I ever dealt with belonged to *le bébé* I diapered.

This moment dampens my enthusiasm in ways both literal and figurative. The luncheon suit event is coming up, the needle noses have crippled

me, and static electricity is making every fiber of my polyester Targ garb cling to me like kudzu. Worst of all, I find out that the lunch is officially the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston’s annual Grand Gala Ball Fashion Show.

So I am feeling like the Little Match Girl when Becca makes a fairy godmother appearance holding two furs. “Do you need something for the chill?” The gray-and-white-striped chinchilla or the violet beaver shearling poncho? “You’d think I lived in Fairbanks, I love fur so much.” Hoping that shearling is a Locks of Love sort of deal where benevolent beavers voluntarily surrender their pelts for chilly city girls, I choose the poncho. It settles on me like a cloud. I could be wearing a muumuu under it and look smashing. This is better than the moment when the kindhearted mice stitched up a ball gown for Cinderella.

Thanks to Becca’s shearling, I blend right in at the museum, where there are more furs at a Mountain Man reenactment. Also Chanel suits, pearls, diamonds, nothing but pointy shoes, and lots of “work.” Faces filled and Botoxed until they have that quilted, Donatella Versace look, upper lips placid and puffed like a llama’s. “Why do they do that?” Becca whispers as one duck-billed dazzler passes. “The lips walk into the room, then the rest of their body catches up.”

The fashion show starts with a dancer who undulates as if she’s fighting ingestion by a giant, ruffled python. Models walk down the runway with their pelvises tilted forward in the standard “may I offer you an ovary” posture. They all seem to be leaning so far backward to keep their tiny breasts from rolling off their sunken chests. Their defiant sneers announce to those of us nibbling chicken salad at their feet: “You can buy the clothes off my body, but you will never break my spirit.”

One model strides out in a dress so short that Becca observes, accurately, “You can see her tortilla!” To say nothing of the whole enchilada.

After lunch we zip over to the office where she organizes her charity fundraisers. It is just down the hall from “41’s.” (“Clinton is here all the time. They’re darling together.”) As we drive, I ask what would happen if all the money disappeared tomorrow. “Having money calms your nerves. It buys toys. It doesn’t buy health or love. I do have a charmed life. The money is just a big ol’ bonus. I’m married to a man I love. If we lost it all tomorrow, we’d be fine. If I had to move to a trailer, it would be the cutest, chicest trailer you ever saw!”

And I can help her decorate it with bargains from my shopping venues! What a gay time we’ll have scouring Target. She’s going to love walking a mile in *my* pinto beans. They’re a lot more comfortable. 📍