

My best friend Emma keeps saying we will know the dress when we see it. We've been to two large thrift stores with no luck. Emma insists our luck will change and the perfect dress is here waiting for me. However, I don't have my hopes up. The woman behind the counter informs us they close in 15 minutes, so I feel rushed before I've even started. I'm coming up empty when I hear a familiar squeal. I hurry over to Emma who's holding the most beautiful little black dress I've ever seen. My heart skips a beat. Emma nods. I nod. She squeals again. I grab the dress and rush to the dressing room. I call for Emma and her eyes light up. She shrieks and we both start jumping up and down like teenagers.

I can't believe how I look. It fits so perfectly, like it was made just for me. An artfully placed slit allows for a flash of thigh when I move just so. It is modestly sexy and very feminine and I am thrilled.

When I get home, I hang the dress on the back of my closet door. After I climb between the sheets, I lay there, admiring my dress and imagining what Jo will say when she sees me wearing it tomorrow.

Closing my eyes, I see Jo as she was today. I imagine running my hands through her short hair. I wonder what her firm lips would feel like on mine, on my neck, on my...**anything**. Finally, I have to force myself to think of mundane things so I can sleep.

At some point in the night it started raining. Opening the blinds reveals streaked windows and gray skies. Not exactly the kind of weather I want for my date, but that is hours away. I'm sure it won't rain **all** day, but even if it does, I won't let **that** dampen my good feelings.

I have a date with Jo!

Work keeps me occupied, though not enough. I can't stop thinking about her. About what might happen tonight. Doubts creep in. I try not to have expectations that would leave me disappointed. Jo could be boring or be unforgivably rude to the waiter. She might not like me after she knows me better. Maybe I will embarrass her. This line of thinking just makes me more anxious.

By the time I leave work, the rain has stopped, and I'm excited to get home and start getting ready. On the muggy drive, I mentally go through what I would like to do before Jo arrives. I'm overdue for some serious personal grooming.

I decide on my grandmother's pearls. I spend some time in front of the mirror playing with different hairstyles. In the shower, I shave myself silky smooth. Every part of me I can reach gets lavender-scented lotion rubbed in. I can definitely use the calming properties of the scent. My stomach is unsettled, and I wonder if I'll even be able to eat. I haven't felt this nervous since my very **first** date. Telling myself I am being silly doesn't make much difference.

Since I don't have to pull the dress over my head, I get my hair and makeup done first. Just in case, I secure the bun with about 20 **thousand** bobby pins. Applying black eyeliner, my hand shakes and it smears. Cursing under my breath, I look myself in the eyes. "If she doesn't like you, that is her loss. You are pretty and kind and loved and lovable." Despite feeling a little silly, the pep talk helps, and my hands are steadier as I fix the damage under my eye and brush on multiple coats of mascara.

I put on my sexiest underwear and a silky robe. Excitement bubbling, I can't help preening. I make myself laugh, striking poses and doing a catwalk across my room to the mirror. I've got an 80s mix streaming, and I dance around my room and belt out the lyrics to Def Leppard's "Pour Some Sugar on Me". I'm feeling desirable. It's been too long since I felt this. I could get used to it.

Emma texts me, wishing me luck. All that's left to do is slip on the dress and shoes. Carefully, I step into the lace covered fabric, then stand in front of the mirror. A smile spreads across my face. "It's been a long time. Welcome back."

At 5:55 I step into my shoes. I'm just turning off Madonna when there are two raps on my door. I make myself take a deep inhale through my nose to dispel the butterflies before I open it.

But then I suck it right back in.

A sexy half-smile playing across her mouth, Jo stands on my doorstep in a thin charcoal suit made of some sumptuous material and a pale blue collarless button-up silk shirt.

The top two buttons are undone,
and now **I** am, too.