

# **SOMETHING BORROWED**

## **A Wedding Dress Makes the Rounds**

By Anne Moore

My wedding dress has been at the dry cleaner's for ten months. It had already hung by its garment loops in an extra closet for nine years. One hundred dollars is a lot to spend cleaning something, and I vaguely sensed that it was uncleanable, that I'd take it to a

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professional, and they'd tut-tut me for ruining such a lovely dress. I'd had so much fun at our wedding that I'd trashed the lower two-thirds of it. Red wine, champagne, violet lipstick, grime—who invited them? But New York City and a lesbian guest insistent on catching the bouquet will leave their mark on white satin.

I understand the tradition of saving a dress for one's daughters, but it's unlikely I'll pass on any dress to a girl of mine. If I were to have one she'd likely be as outsize as my "little" boys. My husband is of Norwegian stock; I'm not. The first time I was pregnant, and long past the turning-back point, I was at a brunch, and another guest began hectoring the hostess's dad, an obstetrician, about the high rate of cesareans in the United States compared with other countries.

The doctor acknowledged the disparity, but noted that our melting pot had created situations like mine. "This woman should not be bearing that man's child," he said, nodding to us to graphically illustrate his point and scare the hell out of me. "She's not built for it."

But back to the dress. In March, when we were moving out of our house and into smaller quarters, we had to examine all of our possessions and choose one of three options: chuck, store, bring with. The wedding dress faced that scrutiny. I said chuck. My husband said chuck.

My friend Julie, to whom I'd offered the unscathed drop-pearl bodice years ago, claimed that not only was her biological clock not ticking, but it probably had never been installed. "Chuck it," she said gleefully. Then I called mom. She'd paid for the dress—she should have a vote.

So there I was later that day at my neighborhood dry cleaner's blabbing some of the above to the nice Korean lady who runs the

place, including the line about not having any daughters.

She lit up. "But I do."

That was the last I saw of my dress.

I was clearly in no rush to have the dress returned, but a month or so after I dropped it off I made an inquiry.

"Oh, yes," she said. "They're doing a very good job."

The next month: "Oh, no," she said, frowning. "I sent it back. They did not do a very good job."

The following month was June, and I couldn't help but joke to her about every Korean bride in Chicago wearing my dress. Many Korean women are small. I am small. My dress is small. Had it jumped on the wedding circuit?

The dry cleaner thought about my question and smiled. "It is a beautiful dress."

It is a beautiful dress, and not a spot of lace. I have fond memories of that dress, which showed off my best body part—don't get too excited, it's my clavicle. And it demanded only that I wear it; an essay in the *Tribune* described a

dress that demanded a limousine, formal wear, and expensive jewelry. I had those things, but my dress didn't demand them; it was fresh and simple and slightly regal, and served as a tonic when I put it on, washing away my wedding-day nerves.

And I'd gotten it for a song. My mother and I had found it in Bergdorf's. "Anything you want," mom said, despite its eye-popping \$3,200 price tag. She's generous and would have bought it for me, but another one of my sisters grew dizzy at the idea of paying retail and got us into the designer's showroom the next day. Same dress: \$880. I gladly gave up Bergdorf's quiet private fitting room, where everyone speaks in hushed tones and slips you the appropriate bra. At Ada's her fertility problems meshed noisily with her exasperation over my slender but two-dimensional figure, as though some world-class nagging would both get her pregnant and provide me with hips.

This dress had suddenly become dear to me. And now it seemed it

was dear to others.

For part of the summer I was out of the country vacationing, and when I returned I got right back to everyday life. Now I was here, but the dry cleaner was not. She'd gone to Korea. When I asked the people running her store if my dress was ready they got far too excited. "What dress? No, we don't know! We do not know anything about any wedding dress."

I figured my dress went all the way to Korea. What a lucky dress. I wondered if it would tell me all about it when it returned. Would it share the Chicago weddings with me too? That's really all I want, I decided—a peek at where it had been and on whom.

Then the other day I went into the dry cleaner's for the usual laundering and alterations. I thought if the owner were back from Korea I'd ask about my dress, but she wasn't, so I didn't bother.

But when I turned to leave the store I saw a huge white box, as bright and festive as a wedding present among the quilts and rugs and shoes sent out for repair. I

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checked the tag. It was for me. It was my dress. I could have taken it home with me right then, but I didn't have \$100.