

Miniskirts...

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"Not at all," I said.
We went to his desk. He sat down, and indicated a chair I could use.

"What sorts of things are fashion designers influenced by?" I said.

"Whatever strikes them right becomes fashion," said Cosmo. He reached into his wallet and pulled out a set of credit cards. "You're absolutely certain about women's skirts for this year?" he asked.

"Got the whole scoop from Cable News Network."

"Uh-huh," he uh-huhed. He pulled out his lighter and set fire to his stack of credit cards.

"This has nothing to do with what you said about women's skirts," he said as we watched the plastic cards melt into a glob in the ash tray. "I've been meaning to do this for a long time, really."

I acted like I believed him. "Anyway, is it really as easy as you say, that whatever the designer says is going to be fashionable becomes fashionable?"

"Well, there's a limit to everything. The public occasionally turns against a design."

More leg, no vacation

"Yeah, I remember when you told me that Nehru collars were going to be the big thing in the late 60s. I still have one of those shirts you sold me. Wear it to parties. People think I'm a priest on leave."

"I'd rather not be reminded of the, uh, Nehru problem," said Cosmo softly. "I took a real financial bath that year."

Cosmo reached into a desk drawer and pulled out a travel brochure advertising vacations in Europe. "When you say skirts are going to be shorter, how short do you mean?" he said suddenly, a worried look

on his face. "Are we talking about the Carnaby Street look coming back? The miniskirt?"

"Some of them are just barely above the knee," I said. Cosmo looked relieved. "But a lot of them were pretty daring. I would go so far as to call some of the fashions I saw in the report miniskirts."

Cosmo casually tore the travel brochure in half.

"What are you doing that for?" I asked. "Oh, I decided against going to Europe this year," he said, tearing the halves into smaller pieces. "It's not the money, of course. Like I said, I expect a booming market this year as the economy gets better. I just think, well, what does Paris have to offer that I couldn't get in, say, Wichita?"

It was getting time to leave. I wanted to just go, but I knew I would feel guilty (actually, I knew Cosmo would make sure I felt guilty) if I didn't buy something before I left. I had to go cheap, so I looked at the socks. "I'll take a pair of socks," I said.

"I don't sell socks," said Cosmo. "I can get you some designer anklewear, though. Special price to you of \$8.50 a set."

"I thought they were \$8.50 for everybody?" I said.

"Okay, for you, seven dollars. My final offer. Pay only in cash."

"Will you take a check?"
"No chance. Listen, if you can't scrape up the money, just for you I will take the label off the anklewear and sell them to you as socks for two bucks if you don't tell anybody. And remember, this is just a favor for you. I'm not doing this because I need the money or anything. I don't believe for a minute that the return of short skirts is a sign of bad economic times ahead."



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