

# TEN EASY STEPS TO HUMILIATION

By Kelly Meadows

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**CAST: ANGELA and VIRGINIA, two more or less average high school students looking for bigger things through fashion, dating, and teen magazines.**

ANGELA: I saw it in the window. (**grand**) Stunning. Shimmering. Sparkling. Glistening. (**adopts a slinkier attitude**) Beckoning, demanding! I opened the door. I reached. I stretched. I closed my fingers. Then – *she* took it.

VIRGINIA: I'd been looking at it for a year. In the window, on display. It was calling me like a wolf howling across the wind on a cold night in Yellowstone: (**like the wolf**) Viriiiiiiiiignia! Viiiiiiiiirginia, try me oooooonnn! (**back to herself, a bit cranky**) I gave up French fries for a year to get into that thing.

ANGELA: It was one of a kind. It was mine! Then it vanished into thin air. (**a bit too theatrical**) Vanished, like an Olympic runner losing the gold by a hundredth of a second. But in this case, there was no silver. No bronze. (**can't believe it**) Not even an interview.

VIRGINIA: I stalked my prey like a lioness in the jungle. I felt the breeze of her hand reaching out, brushing against the fabric, when with a surge of power, I overcame her with the brute force of a symphony orchestra thrashing towards the triumphant conclusion of Beethoven's fifth!

ANGELA: (**imitating a saleswoman**) "Sure miss, you can try that on (**emphatic**) right over here."

VIRGINIA: (**triumphant**) Victory!

ANGELA: (**defeated and vengeful**) Now, instead of my prom dress, I reach for a bowl of ice cream. Instead of a helpful saleswoman, it's my mother – the critic. "Angela, don't you think you've had enough?" (**sassy**) Can you turn pralines and cream into a prom dress, Mother? Well until that happens, I haven't had enough.

VIRGINIA: I wouldn't say we were spoiled. I'd spent my whole life chasing dangling carrots but catching junk food. But last year my mom bought me a subscription to *Young Miss Magazine*,

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and I devoured it. Devoured it like I usually devoured a bowl of pralines and cream!

ANGELA: Carrots dangled from the magazines like stalactites on a cave ceiling... promising, questioning, (**less enthused**) dripping mineral water on my head...

VIRGINIA: (**imitating the magazine headline, really silly and over the top**) "Lose five pounds in five days!"

ANGELA: "Does he really love you?"

VIRGINIA: "What should I wear on the first day of school?"

ANGELA: (**more emphatic**) Does he *really* love you?

VIRGINIA: (**reeling off magazine titles**) Sports and girls; math and girls; yogurt and girls.

ANGELA: (**like it could never happen**) Does he really love you? Get real!

VIRGINIA: "Yogurt and math." Now *that* was interesting.

ANGELA: (**as her mother**) "Angie, time for dinner!" (**responding to her mother**) "Mom, I don't think he really loves me." (**addressing the audience**) We were stupid. We thought those magazines would tell us if he really loved us when they were actually in the business of selling vanity.

VIRGINIA: (**sigh**) Timothy Blake.

ANGELA: Then there was Timothy Blake.

VIRGINIA: I scanned those issues for a year trying to figure out if Timothy loved me. Like there was something in there written just for me. (**silly**) "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus!" It never dawned on me to talk to him.

ANGELA: Timothy loved *me*! It said so – on page 16 of the January issue.

VIRGINIA: (**recalling, almost fairy tale**) Timothy was standing in the hallway, beams of light caressing him, shining through the window. He was illuminated like an angel in a stained glass painting. Delicate as a hummingbird, yet imposing as a mountain lion. His head turned this way, then that, like Michael Jackson starting off a dance number. I circled around him, quietly reciting "Ten Hints for Landing the Boy You Want" that I'd read and memorized the night before. And then, two steps away...

ANGELA: (**talking to Timmy**) "Timmy, you look like you need some help."

VIRGINIA: (**with disgust**) Angela.

ANGELA: “Sure, Timmy. It’s right around the corner, then past the music room, down the hall, make a right, and- (***giggles***) oh, I’ll just take you.”

VIRGINIA: (***imitating ANGELA***) “Oh, I’ll just *take* you. Hee hee hee.” She stole my date, and worse, my strategy.

ANGELA: Virginia was glaring at me like I’d taken the last prom dress off the rack. We’d actually never spoken to each other. I had my clique, she had hers. Mine was better. She was jealous.

VIRGINIA: I took my *Young Miss* magazines and threw them into the fireplace. Then, I burned up a year’s worth of my mother’s *Cosmos* for good measure. I can hear my mother now, (***SHE gets louder as ANGELA talks over her starting here.***) calling to me like a sadistic schoolmarm in a Brontë novel. Mom, shut up already!

ANGELA: (***as VIRGINIA’s mother***) “Virginia! I paid good money for those. They’ll teach you how to be a real woman someday!”

VIRGINIA: (***contains herself, after a short pause***) I didn’t want to grow into that. A forty-four year old version of “how to find out if he really loves you!” I wasn’t about to *be* forty-four – ever. At this rate it was going to take me fifteen years to master 16, and I wasn’t about to get any older until I got it right.

ANGELA: “Oh, Timmy, sure, I’d love to go to the dance with you.”

VIRGINIA: Of course, Angela said yes where 90 percent of the student body could hear. It stuck in my head like peanut butter in a dog’s mouth. See, we all thought he already had a girl and just didn’t say anything. Turns out he spent all of his time studying jazz piano and never left the house after six thirty.

ANGELA: I spent weeks reading up in the zines. (***listing off all the needs, annoyed with this list***) “The perfect prom date.” The corsage. The dress. The dinner. The after party. The lipstick. The shoes. The nails! The hair! The diet. “Ten easy steps to Aphrodite!” By the time I was finished, no guy could live up to me.

VIRGINIA: I accepted a date with a guy named Buxton Lancaster. Bux, for short. Well, he was friends with Timmy. He played bass with Timmy when they practiced jazz. It wasn’t the same, but...

ANGELA: (**exhausted**) The shoes. The make up. More hair. The corsage. The attitude. When I was done with all that I was too tired to go.

VIRGINIA: And the dress. (**imitating a magazine, as if SHE's a droll old professor**) "A young woman's personality can be expressed through the dress she inhabits. The proper dress shouldn't be a reflection of how much money she can make her mother spend on her, but simply be an extension of the young woman's own personality!" When I saw that dress in the window... I felt extended. I extended my hand... (**with glee**) and grabbed it!

ANGELA: "This is a young woman's chance to show that special man what she's capable of. That she can be stunning on the inside as well as the out. That if the dress comes off-" (**stunned**) Oh, how naughty! (**as her mother**) "Young lady, what are you reading?" (**a bit embarrassed**) Well, oops, I mistook a *Cosmo* for a *Young Miss*. And what I learned is, women's magazines not only *expect* us to be shallow, they *demand* it! But I didn't want that dress for me! I wanted it for Timmy. (**catches herself**) You know what I mean.

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