

# ENVY!



A MAGAZINE FOR THE LITERARY CURIOUS

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FEATURING SCIFI/FANTASY AUTHOR STEPHEN HUNT

INTERVIEWS  
ALLEGORY ALLEY  
WRITING ADVICE  
SHORT STORIES



# MARCH CONTEST WINNER!

BY MICHELLE TOALE-BURKE



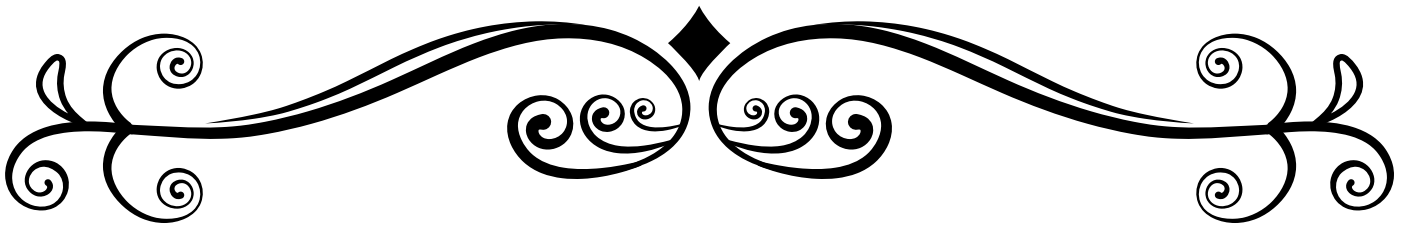
We are pleased to announce Jen Watkins as the winner of Envie's Non-Fiction Humor Contest. We hope you enjoy reading her winning story *Tightass* as much as we did.

This is Jen's first magazine publication and we couldn't be happier that it's with Envie. Congratulations Jen! Connect with Jen on Twitter [@bobareann](https://twitter.com/bobareann).

Thank you to everyone who submitted stories. We thoroughly enjoyed reading them and look forward to reading more in the future!

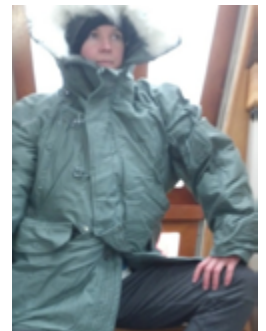
Keep Writing!

Michelle



## Tightass

BY JEN WATKINS



The meeting is in fifty-two minutes.

I pull on a navy-blue sweater dress that hugs my curves but says that I'm a snazzy professional. It's a new dress. "Oh, you have to get that," the saleslady had said as I stood in front of the dressing room mirror at Macy's. I'd only been trying on clothes to kill time. But I did look great. I checked the price tag and could swing it.

It's vital that I look good when I rub elbows with the poobahs of capitalism, I'd rationalized.

Normally, I work from my apartment, safe behind a scrim of isolation. I huddle in the corner of my couch with my laptop propped on my outer thigh. It's not great for the spine, but it keeps my clothing budget to a minimum. But for this meeting, a power outfit is required.

My brown booties and brown purse will work with the dress. Mom always says navy blue and brown is a sophisticated color combination. She sends Dad back upstairs to change when he wears black socks with his navy suit. I'm careful to avoid the rookie pitfalls: I removed the tags from the dress and applied deodorant after putting it on. But there is a flaw in my design. It's nippy out there, so I can't go without tights. The fluorescence of my pallid legs would blind passersby and the wind up my skirt would chill my spirits.

I rummage through my sock drawer. There are black, white, and nude nylons. There are pink ballet tights and patterned yoga tights. I tug each loose from the balls of mated socks and drop them over my shoulder like party streamers. But wait—there in the back is my outfit's salvation. Under the knee-high rainbow socks with a pocket for each toe are navy blue tights. I've not seen these in years, in who knows how long.

The search has left me breathless and I feel the need to rush. I don't bother with the sexy pointed toe on the edge of the tub. Instead, I flop to the floor and pull the tights up both legs simultaneously, rutching and wriggling. I lift my butt off the ground and yank the tights up to my belly button. I roll to standing and perform a series of unbalanced lunges to stretch the tights, but something still isn't right. I catch rolls of fabric and yank until the crotch of the tights reaches my own. I pick the wedgie, smooth my skirt, and fluff my hair in the mirror.

They will see that I've dressed for the job I want.

The meeting is in forty-four minutes.

Purse, keys, out the door. I pat my purse ensuring by feel that I am armed with my usual paraphernalia. I've got my business cards, my baking-soda whitened smile, my winning personality. I'm ready. Down the stairs I hurry, but carefully—I'm not used to walking in these booties and a twisted ankle will not do (how would I afford the co-pay?).

The Lincoln Park Chamber of Commerce meeting must not begin without me. This is my chance to network. Starting a business as a twenty-two-year-old in a new city after the financial crisis is no walk in the park. I walk through the park—it's a shortcut to get to the L train.

They will see me as a competent professional.

Once on the train, I take a deep breath. Twenty-nine minutes until the meeting starts. I will be punctual, as usual, assuming the CTA doesn't halt the train and go on strike. They've done it before. As I grip the greasy bar and look out at the grimy city, I notice a strange feeling in my stomach. No, not the collywobblers. This feeling isn't in my stomach, but on my stomach. The elastic band of the tights, the band that was the circumference of a Coke can before I inserted my body into it, is contracting toward my hips.

I consider the origin of these tights. Where did I get them? When? Then is struck me. Are these the navy tights from my fifth-grade costume? I'd played the genie.

My closet, my kitchenware, my life is a model of frugality. One might remark that I am bravely staring down my consumerist demon. In reality, having never had a steady paycheck, I am cheap. Let's just say I don't have to scroll to view my monthly credit card statement. Even my new professional work dress is accessorized with hosiery from, what I am now certain, is the Clinton era.

Spreading my legs wide to maintain balance as the train trundles, I release my hold on the bar. Through my dress, I pinch the lip of the tights and bounce my knees as I hoick the tights higher. I try to do this subtly, but it's not a subtle move. I don't glance around the car to see who has noticed. Ever since Janet's nip slip, the wardrobe malfunction has moved mainstream, right? And these are strangers. I don't travel this direction usually. I'll never see them again. The city is anonymous.

*The meeting begins in fourteen minutes.*

We all file off the train and I let everyone pass. The tights situation



has worsened. Rather than slide down my torso, they roll, and their rate of descent is increasing. I reach the steps and grip the railing. The tights have cleared my bum. The only thing keeping them now at my knees is the tension put on them as I take each step.

At the bottom of the stairs, I adopt a new strut. It's more of a waddle. I maintain distance between my knees at all times by swinging my legs out to the side. This requires I loosen my pert upright posture for a swayback. I look constipated. I look like I am giving birth and the head is crowning. My fellow pedestrians are giving me space.

*The meeting begins in nine minutes.*

They will see me radiate confidence.

I reach a dark alley and duck off the sidewalk. Ok, it's not dark, and it is more of a side entrance, but it will have to do. The pavement is wet with the repulsive slop of urban life, so I drop the straps of my purse around my neck, leaving both hands free. But my purse contains an assortment of dumbbells and threatens to do in my hyoid, so I lift the straps to my forehead and my purse-cape becomes a yoke.

My modesty will be preserved if I work fast. I flip my skirt up to my waist. The knit dress clings nicely there. Thank goodness for small miracles. I am free to gather my Girls Size 12 tights from between my knees and pull them up to where they belong. I flip down my skirt and look out to the sidewalk. The few passersby are oblivious to what has come to pass here. I slip the purse off my head and perform the smoothing and fluffing motions of every woman pulling herself together. Coco Chanel said to look at one's self in the foyer mirror before leaving and remove one thing. But did she have any sage advice for one stepping from an alley?

I'm certain I've pulled this off. But then I see the plate of glass that opens onto the alley one story above. A group of gentlemen in business suits form a sociable queue for a registration table. I've caught their attention. And the numbers on the side of the building catch mine. I've arrived at the Chamber of Commerce.

*The meeting begins in seven minutes.*

What else is there to do? I open the door and go inside.

#

I receive more business cards than at any previous networking event. I don't think it was my confidence they saw.

*Check out more by Jen Watkins  
below!*

