

WISE AND OTHERWISE

By Kent A. Stock



Fashionably Challenged

I guess I am not a fashionista or perhaps it is because I am approaching geezerhood but there are certain fashion trends I just don't get today. This one is mostly for the young ladies but I have seen the young men wearing them too. What is the them? Torn jeans. Yes, jeans you don't accidentally tear a hole in but ones you go to the store to buy pre-shredded at a ridiculous price.

They are all the rage, all the kids are wearing them and all the kids look dumb. Sorry, I have said it, youngsters, grandpa here is calling you out on this fashion nonsense. Back in my day, did I really just write that, the only torn jeans we were allowed to

wear were worn out jeans which we cut off to make shorts. AND WE LIKED IT! If they are not buying the raggedy jeans then women of all ages are buying the shirts/blouses/tops with the shoulders cut out. You have a sleeve, you have a big hole where your shoulders say peek-a-boo, then the rest of your top. I just don't get the hole. Are your shoulders crying out for oxygen? Is it a comfort thing? Did you bend to peer pressure? I need to know!

So we have the gals running around in torn jeans and shirts but, in the interest of equal time, I won't leave the guys out. Dudes, why are you wearing sandals with socks? Not just good, old

American white socks but colored socks. So black or navy blue socks that reach up to the knees and tan sandals are a good look? I'm the one supposed to be wearing support hose, not you.

Of course, everyone's footwear of choice, year round nowadays, is thong sandals. My father, who owned a shoe store, would not condone wearing these all the time, especially the younger kids, because they lacked support.

I don't condone wearing them because I am flip-flop challenged. **Cont. on pg. 7**

Holding It All Together

by Amy McCollom



Spies, Lies, and Thighs
Last weekend I was either going to be a hero, or make a fool out of myself. But, better safe than sorry, they say. At least I didn't involve the authorities.

It all started with a text message that I received from my brother. I was babysitting my granddaughters at the time and couldn't really leave the house unless I packed everyone up, and that would have been quite the endeavor considering how my back was having spasms and I had twisted my ankle slightly on the basement stairs earlier.

Still, I was filled with concern when I read my brother's encrypted text message and my mind was smoking, trying to figure it all out.

The message read: "Beautiful b the Guggenheim", then it had an emoji that looked like it was sleeping and the letters "ers" after that. On the next line there were a bunch of letters and numbers randomly placed that I could not figure out "Lhi8 klee90 rOkhklier4 53fd. It startled me.

My brother had never sent me a message like this, especially an encrypted one. He was always very particular about what he sent out, and always used correct grammar and punctuation. My brother was a doctor, AND lawyer. He has travelled all over the world, working for Samaritans Purse, to Africa, and even adopted a child from Ethiopia. He has friends in India, the Philippines, Africa, Guam, Russia, and many other places. He is prominent in his field and community, the head of several committees, and even rubs elbows with politicians. He has given advice to political decision makers regarding healthcare reform. He did a fellowship at Georgetown University in Washington D.C. specifically in health care reform. He has taken part in re-writing health care policies for certain established entities in Illinois, as well as writing a book, along with Dr. Bradley, called, "The Physicians Pocket Lawyer."

It was clear to me after I thought about all that my brother does and has done what this encrypted text message must mean. He had been kidnapped! He must have realized that I would be smart enough to figure out a code in his message, and could somehow find his location or be able to name his captors. Wow. And I was right in the middle of getting the baby to sleep. My heart began to race. My brother's life could be in my hands!

I carefully laid the semi-conscious baby down next to me, and picked up my laptop. I Googled the phrase, "beautiful b the Guggenheim," but got nothing. Then I looked up just Guggenheim. I honestly didn't know that much about it, other than it has been in a lot of action movies and it is an art museum. Turns out there is another one, in Venice, started by Guggenheim's niece. Could it be that his captors are taking him to Venice? Perhaps

the captors are from Venice. Maybe they have links to the Italian Mob. Guggenheim sounds German. Mmmhmm, Nazis. But the Guggenheim is in New York City. So I looked up the address of the Guggenheim in New York.

But what if my brother is a spy? Have all those vacations he has gone on been lies? Is he secretly asking me to join him in New York at the Guggenheim? Is that what this sleeper emoji is referring to? Is he a sleeper spy? Maybe his whole family is in on it. I tried to call his wife, but it went to voicemail. I didn't dare leave a message. What if I was wrong, or what if they all were kidnapped or what if she didn't know my brother was a spy? I couldn't exactly say, "Um, hi. I got this strange message, so did somebody get kidnapped, or do you guys want me to join your spy ring?" That would be weird.

I needed advice. So I called my 15-year old son over to look at the message. He has read a lot of books about spies, and war, and codes, and played lots of video games, plus he is pretty current on today's lingo and sayings. He looked at the message intently, then said, "I don't know. Never seen anything like that. Maybe he butt dialed you."

"No, how can you butt dial an encrypted message and a sentence at that!?" He shrugged his shoulders and walked away. His twin sister ran in, anxious to be a part of it all, and said, "Let me see!"

She then said, "Mom, that's a butt dial." And she, too walked away.

I still wasn't convinced, because of my abundance of caution and my wild imagination and my love for Sean Connery movies.

I finally decided to text back to see what would happen, so I sent a simple message that just said, "Your last message was confusing. Please clarify."

It wasn't until the next morning that I got a reply. I wondered through the night and even dreamed some curious dreams that startled me awake. But in the end, my brother texted back and said, "Sorry, I guess I thigh dialed you. I had my phone in my front pocket while I was driving yesterday."

I was actually a little disappointed he wasn't a spy after all.

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