

I'll tell you a tale ladies and gentlemen, of searching in today's marketplace, for an honest pair of jeans.

This mother of boys needs a pair of jeans cuz you might have to slide on the grass or help put a worm on a fishhook. You gotta wipe marshmallow on em. Sip coffee from a tin cup on a crisp mountain morning.

So, I start out at the mall, because this is America. And I begin at the age-appropriate middle-age section of the mid-to-high end department store with the mirrory perfumed air entrance.

As my search begins, I start spinning through the rack of jeans dismissing the too blue, too teal, wrong pockets, hoidyoidylabel, too long, weird crease, fake fringe, dumb rivets, type offerings . It starts to make the hangers squeak on the big round ring rack, faster and faster, Irritating shrieks almost reaching the timbre of junior highschool chalkboard noises. Waves of flashbacks from the 1970's adolescence of not fitting into any department store department. Fruitless treks through powerpolished linoleum and worn grey rugs, too much chrome. A build-up of fire retardant smelling, ill-fitting, clothes. Often settling for the pet store visit with the well-lit fish or the ice cream cone and a walk past the plastic strands of rain at the indoor fountain.

So what do I mean by an honest pair of jeans? A pair that you would want to wake up and hang out wearing for a whole mid-autumn Saturday kinda jean. Is there something about our twenty first century? Are these such digitized, computerized, satellite, ethernet, wireless, high fructose times that it's made a plain strong pair of jeans obsolete?

Next, I try going to the boutique shop at the mall, you know the long narrow boxes with the themes on the front and the seasonal socksets. So I get to the rack that swoops down to my size like a rollercoaster with shiny knobs and I stop at each jean for inspection: over here you got these already worn in thighs, white and soft like well-cooked chicken – (is there a type of life experience this is supposed to replicate?) Here come the overly pleated knee-crease jeans, the green-tinged jeans, the pre-frayed back hem jeans and the last straw folks is the one-blownout-knee jean with some already-repaired-by-a-fake-industrial-mother jeans. People – I come from a family that wouldn't be caught dead walking their bike up a hill. The idea of

breaking in your jeans was the next best thing to breaking in a horse or a new pair of boots. You had to earn it in snags and dings on the barbed wires of life – You got to have the scabs and scars of art works and globs of glue, camping trips, sliding on rocks, maple syrup. Getting lost and getting found again with stories to go with. Those little rivets on the corners of the jean pocket meant something to us!

Don't the boutique folk, with the pre-lived textures feel robbed of some seminal coming-of-age-experiences that could be happening and recorded in the jeans?. The Three-legged dog saloon and the snake by the yucca plant and the flat tire by the rooster. Come on - you with the pre-built hole in the hip and the leaky seams with the shrinkwrapped lunch with headphones on - tell me *your* life story.

(Allright - I know this is really a treatise on ageing).

But people - let's right now admit that jeans have the job in 2005 to hold more and more flesh. Perhaps related to the fewer physical life experiences that contribute to the breaking in of jeans. Is it because we're a "service economy" now? Is it because of the post—capitalist transformation of "work" into so often "sitting in front of a screen" or in leisure game universes played while sitting in soft chairs and drinking soft drinks?

Speaking of service economies - . After the third store, I'm getting exhausted by the mall experience and am in need of an overpriced coffee beverage.

Then, feeling mocha-ripped and ready to dance hiphop. I now try a more middlebracket of the department store departments, and decide to conduct research in the other gender area for fit, pretending to shop for my sons. So here we go with da baggybaggy jeans, the miles and miles of cloth the shades and shades of blue and other pre-creased variations. Some backpockets the size of phonebooks. I see the mall being swept with the extra cloth as we speak.

So how have we slipped into this culture of pre-stressed pre-ripped jeans? Am I so warped by middle-age? So unhip to the gyp – why does this evolution of the jean really get under my skin?

Do the jeans represent a false generosity provided by our culture? A pre-baked existence with bucket seat and a sugar crust of passive expectations?

Are pre-ripped jeans another symptom of our media-induced coma and our love of simulation and celebrity? Identities that extend from children's movie character tie-in products, then come of age in jeans pre-packaged with nicks and scrapes to compose an easier-to-live-with life. Clothing worn-in by a sequencing of corporate-controlled moments. After all, many, thoughts, feelings, emotional inputs, and daily regimes may no longer occur in the physical world - the one in which jeans can serve as buffer.

Has the binge of quickly edited images shredded not only the fibers of our nervous systems, attention spans and memory cords, but also shortened the very the fibers of our clothing? As though one can't possibly live through enough life quickly enough for our jeans to ever become comfortable. Raised on rushed deliveries. We adopt a style of mass-produced wear-n-tear. Big machines abrade, and chemically challenge the jeans to prepare them for our big and little lives of consuming earth resources.

Battered or pampered by the world, jeans in my view, can reflect the way we lead our lives (and who does the laundry). Jeans earn their familiar comfort and frequency of use, by going out into the world and digging in with us, hearing our life story. I just wasn't meeting any jeans at the mall that I could really sit by the fire at night with.

(Next week can we talk about the oodles and oodles of toxic chemicals and wasted water used to pre-wash and pre-stress and pre-rip so many millions of jeans worldwide?)

Upon arriving home empty-handed, I take what's left of my mocha buzz and go to work, noticing how I really don't need jeans to sit in front of my computer and write a diatribe about pre-ripped jeans anyway.

Goodwill here I come!

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