

# Shopping for Trouble

By Jack English

I like to stir up trouble. I come from a long line of trouble makers. I was in a large old fashioned department store and got on a crowded elevator. It was built before computer controls so there was a lot of whirring and clicking as relays checked everything before it started to move. And when it moved, it moved very slowly.

I turned to the woman next to me, a stranger, and said, “People don’t sing on elevators the way they used to.”

She looked at me for a second or two, and then, just to be agreeable said, “You are right. I cannot remember the last time I heard singing on an elevator.”

By this time, everyone was looking at me. Well, it was Christmas, so, being a trouble maker, I started to sing. “Hark the herald angels sing...” A few people joined in so I started again, “Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the new born...” Then I said, “Wait, this is my floor and stepped off the elevator.

As I did, the rest of the people on the elevator continued to sing.

“Peace on earth and mercy mild...” The singing faded as the elevator rose to the third floor, rain gear, cosmetics, and ladies’ lingerie.

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Men and women shop differently. My wife would say, “I’m going shopping.”

Just to show a little interest in her life, I might ask, “What are you going to get?”

She might say something like stockings. Two and a half hours later, when she returned home, I might ask, “Did you get what you wanted?” Again, just to show interest.

Then she would say something like, “Do you like my new outfit?” and hold up a skirt and blouse. Then she would hold up another skirt and blouse identical to the first one, but a slightly different shade of the first outfit’s color, not a totally different color, just a slightly different shade of the same color and say, “I got this outfit in case you didn’t like the other one.”

I am thinking, *What like? They are virtually identical.* So, I would say, “They both look nice.”

Then she would ask, “Do you think this outfit will make me look fat?”

The answer to the fat question is always “no.” Only someone with a death wish would say anything else.

Then she would say something like, “And on the way home, I also bought some chips, dip and a refrigerator.”

I did not know there was anything wrong with our old refrigerator. But I would bite my lip and ask, “Did you find the stockings you were looking for?”

And she might say, “I couldn’t find anything.”

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Here is where men and women shop differently. First, a man never goes shopping unless he has a clear idea of what he wants. And then, he only shops when it is absolutely necessity. If a man needs socks, it probably means he is down to his last pair. Then when he shops for socks, he makes a bee line for the men’s department. A man does not look left or right. He looks straight

ahead. He wants to avoid the risk of being distracted by a sale on chain saws or lawn tractors. When he gets to the men's department, he will stop. Survey the room, and move directly to the sock display. No steps are ever wasted wandering around to see whether there is anything else he might need or to see whether there is a bargain to be had.

As for picking out socks, men only see two colors, black and not black, so selection is easy. I scooped up six pairs of black socks, waited in line behind two other customers, paid for my order, then headed back to the elevator. Again, no wasted steps.

I got there just in time to join the last verse of Hark the Herald Angels Sing. Yeah, they were still singing.

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