

*from* **SPRAWL**

**THE LEFT WING**

**J. Crew**=I mean what do *you* think I should have in my closet? The coat I have is the most finely assembled piece of clothing I own. Beaters in every color, black or brown flats, dressy shirt and dressy black pants, jeans that hug whatcha mama gave ya. Here, you can go from casual to elegant for every occasion. I scored a lot of new items--many will become staples in my closet for this season and many future seasons to come. I bought an incredible amount of clothes for next to nothing--well, not really, I blew a ton of money, but for what I bought and the quantity of things bought, I did extremely well. You can always find the basics.

**Kate Spade**=If fashion companies can't make consumers hungry for their products, they're in trouble. The merchandise lacks pizzazz. Well, it's just one of the few brands of many brands that I love. KS handbags are unique and don't look like anyone else's handbags. Hmm... there's nothing else I can say, except I LOVE EM. Sorry, I know, lame! Remember when Kate Spade bags were so awesome that they were knocked off by everyone? There were fake ones on every corner in L.A. and New York?? Well, Ms. Spade plowed through the bad and has come out the other side, the good side. Her handbags have evolved. Her stationary line is gorgeous. Her shoes have never been cuter. The accessories are original. And the whole line is presented in a cute shop in Fashion Island. Good customer service. Great selection. Colorful, preppy and classy. These are the must-haves. People even throw fake purse parties in their homes. I've always wanted a Kate Spade bag—I'd like to buy lots more. The energy of spring inspires me. Everyone who wears one of these bags is trying to make a statement. I feel good about myself wearing one of these bags.

**Coach**=They're everywhere now. No one can walk around without seeing someone carrying one. Coach isn't just being worn by Mom anymore. I like to stay toward the neutral colors, though the new colors are too flashy. My favorite bag doesn't have the Coach print on it, it just is real unique looking and it goes with a lot. Purses? Check. But I'm not a guy who's into purses, nor do I plan on dating one, so I kind of skip over that part of the store (which is really about 90% of it). Wallets? Check. They may not be the most unique, but as it goes, everyone needs a standard wallet for those boring, stuffy functions where too much style is frowned upon. May those events be few and far between, and may your Coach wallet be your consolation. Service? Check. Wonderful salespeople who are knowledgeable and willing to help. All with a smile. Awww. I used to be able to afford them, but something changed.

**H & M**=So there was this guy wearing what looked to be girls' jeans, they were so tight on him, so my questions are: how many guys wear jeans made for girls? do you find them really tight? do girls like guys to wear these tight jeans? I think he looked hot. Maybe they're boys' jeans. I've had really good results. They have girl and boy jeans. Not just *emo* kids where 'em. But you'd find a lot of people in their twenties do as well, specially those really into the music scene. I purchased a work shirt here a few years back. After two washing cycles, the shirt had shrunk (either that or maybe I've put on a few pounds... but I'd like to believe it's the washing.) So I put the shirt on for work and you know, it's a little snug around the chest and back area... fine. I go about my day at work and bend over to pick up some heavy equipment. I hear a tiny rrrrrrip. I thought hmmm, strange... all of a sudden, my shirt feels more freed up, know what I'm sayin'? A lot of boys wear skinny jeans but they're not girls' jeans, even though I do know boys who get there skinny jeans in the girls' section.

**Circuit City**=My sister went to CC to buy a laptop for her home business and they sold her a laptop for home use not for business (she doesn't know much about computers) and she wanted me to help her set it up. When I saw what they sold her I was just a little upset and called them up and confronted them with the problem and they basically said that's what she gets. They would not work with us to fix the problem and charged her 15% re-stocking fee so now she is out a computer and \$130.00. I for one will (and as many people as I can reach) never shop there again. I asked about the power-handling capacity of a set of speakers and the shocked sales-kid-person first looked at me with saucer eyes, then immediately began reading the side of the box--as if I couldn't do that myself. Then I asked if the woofer had a foam or rubber surround (btw, foam craps out in 5 years plus or minus... impregnated rubber can last nearly forever)... he had not a clue. OK I'm long but I guess what I mean to say is don't expect much at CC or most of these other places. Better you should learn a little on your own online and know what you're buying. It's usually not rocket science. Besides it's been too noisy in the ones I've been to.

**Banana Republic**= I bought 3 or 4 of them—they're great for summer. These will look great with a pinstripe suit or jeans. It advertises a man who knows what he's doing. Nothing is more *sauve* and commanding than a striking tie. I don't even want the jeans. To impress your boss, to outshine the guy in the cube next to you or to get the attention of your cocktail waitress. This isn't for me—this is some kind of lawyer-look. Of course *you* think it looks

good. I would thoroughly love to find a store that generates clothes of the quality of yonder days. My whole life is just such a waste. Banana Republic's dirty little secret: the sizes are all off. For pants, whatever you think your waist is, at Banana Republic, Your Waist = Your True Waist + 1. So, for all of you who received new BR pants for Christmas, and thought to yourself, "Hey, I'm still a size [ ] pants, I guess I didn't really gain that much weight over the holidays," think again, sucka. As I am a guy, I can only speak for men's clothing. But what's good for the goose....

**Bath & Body Works**=I'm trying to stay out of the store too, mostly because a lot of the products I buy and get attached to at these sales are discontinued. It's heartbreaking when I think I've found a really great product, only to find that I'll never be able to find it again. Who doesn't love this store? They have so many great scents and the staff is very friendly. My personal favorite is cucumber melon body spray. For around 9 bucks the bottle lasts at least 3-4 months, and I use it generously every day! I bought the Breathe Happiness lotion and some of the new volumizing shampoos and conditioners. Last time I walked in specifically just to get hand soap and I didn't emerge until 25 minutes later. I just get so easily distracted by all the fun goodies! It's also become a fun and handy place to pick up any last minute gifts or treats! I'd also really like to check out the AquaTanica Spa products I bought when that line was launched because I've had really good results.

**Eddie Bauer**=Sort of a starter test to introduce my kids to camping. So I never really bought their clothes because they always seemed expensive, plain and a tad ugly. You know, sometimes I just need a plain high quality v-neck sweater. Is that so wrong? Ladies, use the men's changing room upstairs. There are nearly twice as many stalls. Why would they set their store up like that? But one sad day, I was bored and stuck at a lousy shopping complex with nothing better to do, so I went in and bought some flip-flops and a skirt. The skirt? I'm having to bust my ass to make it to my classes today, all the while pulling down the back of my skirt that bunches up and shows my ass to everyone. I try to stop here often to check out their sale & clearance items, but the atmosphere at this location bugs me somewhat because it seems that there is a salesperson stationed every two feet and they are always eyeballing you & ready to pounce. Sales commissions must be a huge portion of their compensation.

**Gymboree**=I think it's safe to assume that we are not the only ones who walk or use the CTA, therefore this is a

horrible intersection for a Gymboree, considering all of the little ones who need to cross that street. If you think I'm joking, go try and cross North Ave. at Kingsbury, with a stroller. I dare you. I feel like a mouse trapped in a maze trying to get to it. The front door is hard to open, it's heavy with a hard close. It's difficult at best to get a stroller through that door. Very annoying. Then, you wait for the elevator. The slowest elevator in the free world. It only has to go three floors! What takes so long!?! When you step out of the elevator on the third floor, you enter a long hallway, reminiscent of a maze. It goes something like this: right, left, left, right, left, left right, right, left and then down the hall on the left hand side. Voila! You're there! I wish I were exaggerating.

**The Body Shop**=I like their company strategy and marketing mix. I like the environmental approach of Body Shop. The prices are a little high but they go to all these exotic places to get the ingredients. I visited their headquarters in Southern England, and they are nice people. The lipstick keeps lips soft, however, it does not last long. Finally found the facial brush I like. It's the lucite kind that sorta looks and feels like a baby brush. I would find the wooden ones with the natural bristles, but they are too ruff. I ran in and ran out before my nostril membranes peeled away.

**Lacoste**=I only went to college so I could play tennis. I've got their credit card and to me a credit card is like free money. I use it to get things and then I never have to pay for them. Sure I get credit card bills, but in my mind paying those credit card companies is wholly unrelated to any shopping I may have done previously. It's just a thing I do every month. I look forward to each new season and find that they simply outdo themselves each time. Dad, no one says "preppie" anymore and besides preppie is cool, you know, as a style. Anyone that finds their style to be "boring" and "the same old thing" is perhaps boring themselves.

**Sears**=Why do some people suck so darn bad? Like most of you, I own a vacuum. It's only a couple of years old and a well-known brand. My vacuum needed its bag to be changed, no biggie, right? That's what I thought. Until my husband went out to find some replacement bags. He went to every store in our town (and a few surrounding towns) and not one of those stores carried the bags for our vacuum. Unbelievable! I arrived today and was told by the lil ole lady in the men's department where I bought 501's that drastically shrink and that I could not exchange them. I was heated, but kept my cool and explained that they

should have a better system of informing the customer that not all 501's are created equal. She held her ground and said that it was store policy and that Levi's themselves were to blame. I agreed that it was not her fault, but I also explained that my 32-30's were now 28-26's and if they are to shrink they should put the shrunken size on the label, or I should have been warned by the checkout gal. Maybe she is a sweet ole lady, maybe she was just tired of hearing my bull\$hit, but she ultimately told me to grab a pair of "preshrunk" jeans. I am pleased to announce that these have survived a wash and will be in my starting lineup for the next few months.