

Contact

Marie Heath

Katherine checked her e-mail again. She sighed, no messages from her fourteen year old granddaughter, Cairyn. *Well it's only been a few minutes. Besides, I'm not sure how to handle this.* She recalled the discussion she'd had with her daughter.

"I can't seem to talk to Cairyn anymore," Amy had lamented. "She seems down all the time, but she won't talk to me about it. I'm worried about her."

"She's a teenager, Amy. Get used to it." Katherine remembered going through parental angst with Robbie, her own eldest child. "When you're that age, everything is tragedy or ecstasy. There's no in-between."

"But what if it's something serious, like sex or drugs? Shouldn't I get her to tell me about it?"

"Do you have any reason to believe it's something specific like that?" Katherine asked.

"No, I don't. I have no idea what's bothering her. Would you talk to her, Mom? She's always been close to you."

Katherine hadn't gone along at first, not because she didn't want to help, but because she thought Amy should sort out her own child. Besides, she thought it was probably just a phase her granddaughter was going through, something that would pass quickly. But in the end she had relented.

She had decided to ease into things by sending a short e-mail to Cairyn. Katherine had used a conversational tone asking the teen how she was and what she was up to these days.

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When Cairyn received her grandmother's e-mail, she was suspicious. *Gramma never sends me e-mail. Mom must have put her up to it. Why won't they leave me alone.* She swept aside the books and clothes that were heaped on her bed, disturbing Fritz, who darted across the room and hopped onto the window sill. *Even the cat knows when I don't want company,* she thought as she flopped onto the bed. *Why are people so thick?*

Yet Cairyn loved her grandmother. Gramma had taken care of her after school when she was younger. On Mondays they would make chocolate chip cookies together, enough to last the rest of the week. The thought of the sweet aroma and the chewy texture of those delicious morsels had encouraged her to go straight to Gramma's after school. They'd had a lot of fun together.

Cairyn thought about how to answer the e-mail. *I don't want to hurt Gramma's feelings, but I don't want to invite questions either. I suppose I could write glib, moronic crap like 'I'm fine. How are you? I'm doing my homework.'* Nah, Gramma would just ask more specific questions.

Cairyn's thoughts were interrupted by a buzz from her cell, probably Nita texting her a message.

That gave her an idea. *I'll show Gramma we don't have anything in common anymore, then maybe she'll leave me alone.*

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When Cairyn's mail arrived, Katherine clicked it open anxiously. At first she thought there must have been some transmission error. It read:

Hi Gramma,

I'm AIGHT. Just ADIH. KNIM? Tonight I'm listening to i-tunes and then watching MTV in HD, or maybe I'll read an e-book on my Kindle. U? SOTMG. WBS.

Katherine could understand some of it but what were all those other abbreviations? *How am I ever going to talk to her in any meaningful way when I can't understand what she's saying? Maybe I should speak to her on the phone.*

Katherine sipped a cup of tea as she thought it over. *Is Cairyn intentionally trying to put me off with all that texting lingo? Does she think I'm a troglodyte? Well, I guess I am compared with kids her age,* she admitted to herself. She decided to play along.

Hi Cairyn,

It was good to hear from U. I'm OK. When I was your age, I'd ride my 3-speed and dream of driving a T-BIRD. Tonight I'm looking forward to sitting in my EZ chair and listening to 8-track tapes on my HIFI. Then I might put a B&W movie in my VCR and watch it while eating a TV dinner.

I miss you. Stop by anytime for CCC and TLC. XOXOX

As soon as Katherine hit the send button, she regretted it. *What if she thinks I'm making fun of her? Teens can be so sensitive. Will she really think I'm so out of it that I actually have 8-track tapes?* Ten minutes later she had her answer.

Gramma,

LOLH (laughing out loud hysterically!) ILY (I love you.) I'm sorry I wrote to you in code. I was trying to spurn you and I feel bad about it. I'd love to come over for chocolate chip cookies tomorrow after school. Wait until I get there and we'll make them together. LOL (lots of love)

PS: The other codes I used were: AIGHT (alright), ADIH (another day in hell), KNIM (know what I mean), SOTMG (short on time, must go) and WBS (write back soon). What're 8-track, 3-speed and HIFI?

Katherine sighed with relief. It was a start.