

Traveling Companion: A hair-raising experience

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She rushed in on Friday morning. She was distraught. I thought something terrible had visited her. Maybe, she was robbed. Maybe, her husband left her. Maybe, she was in a car accident. Maybe, the doctor told her that she had cancer. None of the above, I found out. But it was something more terrible. I wasn't prepared for the devastating news. Neither was she. While combing her hair that morning, she discovered it.

Her whole day was a disaster as the news of the discovery consumed every thought, every moment of her day. She plotted and planned her future, even contemplating some drastic, colorful approaches.

Later in the day, a friend arrived. She shared her shock with the friend. I came back later, only to find the friend fine-combing the follicles to see if any other strands of the disease had occurred since morning ablutions. I tried to lighten the tension by reminding them that they should stop the hunting expedition because it might create others by default. Still, they persisted; hoping that the morning's discover was just a mirage.

She told me that men who support grey matter look distinguished. In fact, my friend informed me that I had supported more grey matter since I arrived in the parish. I simply said that, like the old Smith-Barney commercial, I earned it. Still, it was not a consolation for a crisis-ridden secretary.

She reminded me that a woman's grey matter makes her an "old hag." I even tried to be biblical, reminding her that her discovery was a sign of wisdom. It still did not satisfy her.

I may even try to insert some humor into the situation. I may greet her each morning when she comes to work with, "Any exciting discovery since yesterday?"

Maybe her problem is a faulty diet of coffee and allowing Mounds to tickle her palette or even sinusitis. Then, again, it could be stress-related. I promised to compensate her for the stress in her work environment, but, the solution may be more mental than monetary.

Years ago, I remember my mother having her own solution to the problem. She soon gave up as the cure was worse than the disease. Maybe, some day, in the not too distant future, our secretary will give up the societal expectation and instead, realize that the cure can be worse than the disease.

I tried to soothe her fear by invoking arguments of Biblical proportion, where Proverbs reminds us that it is better to have wisdom and knowledge than silver and gold. Of course, it was a hard sell.

I also tried to stretch some Biblical truths, reminding her that when Jesus cast out some devils, he reminded the healed to be careful lest a legion take their place. The message was obvious. Pluck one out today and his friends will take his place and make a mockery of you.

I enlisted the help of H.C. Metchen who said that "the older I grow, the more I distrust that familiar doctrine that age brings wisdom."

So, as I philosophize, I wonder will it be Clairol or chaos? More Melanin or more misery? More Emu oil or more emancipation? More fear or more frivolity? More whining or more wisdom? More comparisons or more contrast? More indecision or more individuality?

I do know that when she reads this article, I may be in for another hair-raising experience.