

NEARNESS CAN BE ANNOYING

Nearness can be an enticing quality, yet in real life it can be equally annoying. Consider: pucks that *nearly* find the net, rain clouds that *nearly* water crops or buses *nearly* caught. I can now add one more example of the problematic nature of nearness chronicles -- hot water lines that *nearly* connect to showerheads.

I was recently in India, immersed in a two-week study program in Hyderabad. While grateful for the campus accommodations, I was somewhat surprised while surveying the bathroom. A small hot water tank perched near the ceiling, directly above the toilet. Lines snaked into the wall in the general direction of the shower.

After a long flight, I was thrilled at the prospect of a long, hot shower. You see, I'd been warned that my 15-day stint would, at best, involve tepid bathing. Reports had clearly stated, "There are no hot showers."

Never before had I been so pleased to receive 'wrong' information. That piping hot shower would be a taste of Utopia. Showerheads deliver more than H₂O to me -- they transport sheer liquid bliss that bounces off my balding pate cascading down this bony body. Immersed in delight, I croon forth a baritone rendition of "The hills are alive with the sound of music."

Ok, I admit that last bit is somewhat of a stretch, but you get the idea; I was delighted to see the hot water lines.

But wait, something was amiss. Why the extra faucet? And why the pail underneath it?

My spidey-senses were tingling with the suspicion that something was amiss. Further investigation revealed that instead of connecting the hot water line to the shower, plumbers had connected it to the lower faucet, thus limiting the shower head to but one temperature -- frigid. Heat seeking individuals were limited to filling the bucket from the lower faucet, then pouring it over themselves one cupful at a time. The soul of this shower connoisseur sank.

And right about then, I recognized a decision needed to be made. Poised at the crossroad of serenity and despair, I was required to choose the direction my attitude would take. I could grovel in my small-minded state of dismay, convinced that I deserved better. Or, I could peer beyond the clouds and rejoice at the glimmers of sunshine that beckoned me to bask.

I chose the latter -- this time. Hot water was supposed to be non-existent in that bathroom, so praise God for the lower faucet. The best things in life are meant to be savoured and I would do so with this warm water, one cupful at time.

Friends, nearness can be a cruel task master, steering toward the wastelands of depression, anger and self-absorption. It whines, "You deserve better than your present experience." "Why is life so unfair?" "Why does this have to happen to me?"

And it is correct on one account; you do deserve better -- better than the bleak options extended toward you. Author Harlan Coben summarized the issue well in stating, "You bring your own weather to the picnic."

There is a bright spot behind every cloud. Though at times difficult to discover, it is truly there for those with eyes that seek.

And those who resist, forging forward with eyes of optimism squeezed firmly shut, are to be pitied above all else. Their self-fulfilling prophesy is punctuated with sorrow and self-pity.

And that's why I choose to sing -- even in cold showers.