

Skeletons can't stay in closet for long

Saturdays I sleep late. That may not be strange. Quite a few people may not sleep at night during the weekends. The reason I sleep late is because I like to watch *Tales from the Crypt*, which is telecast late at night. I like the story line in these episodes. It always has some weird ending, catching you by surprise — almost an O. Henry touch. But, much like the kids who like the lion's roar in the MGM picture better than the picture itself, I am fascinated by the introductions and conclusions rendered by the emcee of this show, a skeleton rising from the coffin.

I have a difficult time believing the entire thing is only a clever puppet show. The squeaky and raucous voice makes the effect completely realistic.

I thought I would never get over this fascination until recently, when I accidentally switched over to news. Oh, no — please don't jump to the conclusion that I am making a comparison between the Dans and Connies and my favorite skeleton of the *Crypt* show.

Dan is handsome, and Connie is beautiful. I am referring to the many stories that make news headlines and deal with skeletons in the cupboards of people in high positions. All we require for these is a person who is in constant limelight.

We allow the person to bask in his or her glory for a few days,

and then we say politely, "If you will please excuse us Sir/Madam..." and step right into their rooms, searching for closed cupboards.

Then the fascinating stories begin. We have the story of the wife of a powerful man who received favors in exchange for protection from investigation; a story on an investment in real estate that should have actually boomed but busted in the end; another "rags to riches" story, not quite appropriate to be released at this juncture; and so on.

To understand how these people always land up in such embarrassing situations, I only have to go back a few years in my own career.

I was working as an assistant manager in a bank branch quite some time ago. Somehow or other, during my tenure of three years in the branch, I saw three different managers come and go.

I had a great time working along with all three managers, but I experienced greater enjoyment in observing the people around me interacting with each of the managers. If those people happened to be borrowers in need of some



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additional facilities, it was even more fun.

The first manager was a chain smoker. When I reported to him in the branch, I had problems seeing his face and noting features through the haze of smoke.

That was because apart from the manager, there were a couple more people smoking along with the manager and exchanging pleasantries.

I found it a bit strange that so many people who entered the manager's cabin finally ended up smoking. Offering a cigarette, I realized, was a conversation opener in that cabin.

The second manager hated smoking. I saw the same borrowers entering the same cabin, but none made the mistake of offering a cigarette or lighting one in the manager's presence.

Now they entered the cabin with classical music cassettes. Business talk was now laced with the appreciation of music, for the second manager was a music buff. The last manager I met before my transfer from the branch was a coffee guzzler.

The transformation of the borrowers from their former selves to coffee guzzlers was again swift and smooth. I was impressed to see that all these borrowers, through empathizing with the power source, had succeeded in getting things done. They were all successful businessmen.

Fortunately, my managers had

minor vices. But if a person in a high position does have weaknesses for more serious things, I am convinced that people around him in search of favors do not hesitate to tempt him, and then the process of creating the skeletons in the cupboard starts.

These skeletons have the nasty habit of sleeping during the early stages of their lives. But the more powerful the owner of the cupboard becomes, the more agitated the skeletons grow. They start knocking, whistling and performing all the antics required to catch attention and get out.

Does this mean all powerful people that are accused actually have skeletons in their cupboards? Maybe not.

But then all it requires to dispel the general fascination is to throw open the cupboards to the public, so everybody may see.

As long as there is hesitation on the part of the accused, people will like to flock around the closed closets and speculate on the contents. And I'm no exception. But what if there really is a skeleton or two?

Even the public would appreciate an honest disclosure. After all, with standards of morality being redefined and lowered daily, the person who discloses may be setting new standards for dishonesty.

Or is it honesty now?

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