

Storm clouds on the horizon

by Andrew Festa

Tornados are sky-born tongues of destruction. They appear out of nowhere, strike carelessly with blinding intensity, and retract back into the sky like a whip after taking some meat off the bones.

Late last week, some friends and I were talking about those tongues at a coffee gathering. We were swapping stories about what we knew of tornados and what they had done to people we knew.

None of the stories were unique, but the similarities are rather interesting. In every recollection, the suddenness and the intensity was overwhelming, awe inspiring yet frightening, and not at all something to laugh absently at. Finally, it was time to go. I decided to head home for another night of tornado-midterm nightmares.

When I got home I figured my bed, having already waited since before my English midterm for my company, could hold off a little while longer. I decided to cruise the stations, tactfully avoiding the Weather Channel. I flipped through all the available cable channels

not finding anything of interest when...suddenly.

"Hey...wait! What did that last channel say?"

I turned it back -- MTV of course -- and there it was again: 'SEX' as bold as a flasher in Central Park at noon. I watched; I listened; I thought I heard the rumble of a storm somewhere in the distance.

I was a little stunned, like the rabbit when it first sees the fox. Unlike the rabbit who recovers and bolts for better places (my bed was loudly calling for me now), I just sat transfixed, caught in an oxymoron: I was held by repulse. The group 'Salt -n- Peppa' was singing one of their latest: "Let's talk about SEX."

I understood their point, we do need to talk about it, but I still thought it was just a little bold. The lead singer sang "Let's talk about sex" while someone in the background said, "He won't make love." So OK, the fox was just a mirage, but the storm's rumble got louder. I saw the point: Sex and Love are not synonymous. Did they really need to use the 'lilpeas' to call for a 'cure'?

The video could well have been a long, elaborate

promotion for one of those 900 services; you know the type: a scantily clad seductress from a Benny Hill fantasy coos at the monitor, runs her finger across her much too red lips, and HOTLY invites you to "call me for some", a long, soft, inhaled sigh, "phone-sex."

Are men actually that



desperate? Are women actually that shallow? Somewhere in the background, a 900 number executive is saying, "Eat your heart out, Sodom and Gomorrah!"

Women are portrayed as seductresses in films, and feminists want to whip the mid-section of the offending male producers until they talk like Mickey Mouse -- never

mind that there are a growing number of female produced B-rated flicks in which women are weak, scared, wearing just less than enough material to dam a sock with, and continually screaming for "help...ooooohhh, help!"

OK, I can dig feminists' anger, though not their devices or tactics, but I've heard next to nothing from those same Gloria Steinem sound-alikes about the trashy displays of their own gender.

Television, with its mass appeal, abuse of morals, distortion of moral standards, demand for sex scenes where love is on permanent vacation, need for violence and an obvious corruption of society and social attitudes is a storm unlike any we've ever seen before. When it finally arrives in full strength, it'll have more tornados than can be successfully dodged. They'll drop down like cloud-borne tongues and thunder-lick us back to savagery.

Will we, like rabbits-scared, freeze before bolting to safety, or will we see the mirage for what it is and act on that knowledge before the mirage becomes a tornado?

"The weather today is becoming increasingly cloudy. Severe thunder

storms are beginning to gather around the capitol and may spread to engulf the entire nation. We now return you to your regularly scheduled program, still in progress."

"Let me see if I have this right, Mr. Thomas. You did nothing wrong?"

"...this is a high tech lynching..."

Of course it is, but who is doing the lynching, Mr. Thomas? Is it the white idiots vying for that famous fifteen minutes of air time, or is it the women throwing inuendos at your face in a verbal stoning?

That'll teach you, Mr. Thomas, to be an uppity black male in a society where women coo enticingly on television, while others stab men in the back nearly ten years after the fact.

Watch out, people, there's a bad moon rising and the storm has only just begun.

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Judge, how about a straight answer?

by Mike Royko

"Judge Thomas, a former assistant has said that you subjected her to sexual harassment. Would you please respond to these allegations?"

"Senator, I recall my grandfather once saying to me, 'Clarence,'--you see he always called me Clarence, since that was my name--he said, 'Clarence, why did you pull that girl's pigtails?'"

"Excuse me, Judge, but I'm not sure I understand what you're talking about."

"I was talking about my grandfather, a poor but proud man, of little formal education but great wisdom and insight into the human condition."

"Yes, we are aware of that, Judge Thomas, and we have all repeatedly expressed our deepest admiration for your grandfather, but we are asking about allegations of sexual harassment. This woman says that you make overtures to her and talked about dirty movies in graphic detail. I don't know what your grandfather has to do with that."

"Senator, my grandfather would have had nothing to do with anything like that, and I regret that you would suggest that he might. He was a poor but upstanding man of the highest

moral values."

"I'm sure he was, Judge Thomas, and I meant no offense, but I'm somewhat confused as to why you began talking to us about him and some girl's pigtails."

"Senator, as I said, a girl who lived nearby in our wretchedly impoverished community made allegations to her mother that I had pulled her pigtails. These allegations were relayed to my grandmother, a woman of great dignity, despite our lack of social standing and financial wherewithall. And she in turn felt obligated to relate them to my grandfather, who confronted me with them, but not in an accusatory manner, since he believed, as do I, that everyone is innocent until proven guilty, even a young, poor minority lad, trying to pull himself up by the frayed straps of his boots, as I was in those early days of my legendary and inspirational life."

"Judge Thomas, we are simply trying to get a truthful answer from you."

"Senator, my grandfather often said that the truth is sometimes found at the far end of a long and difficult road, filled with bumpy potholes and ruts, as most of the unpaved roads in our poor and neglected community were, but that this long, lonesome road

must be traveled before the spring rains turn it to mud and ruin the boots and the straps you are trying to pull yourself up with."

"Judge Thomas, I'm sure that every senator would, if he could, pave your grandfather's road. But could you return to the issue at hand, the allegations of sexual



harassment?"

"Senator, that is what I was doing. After the girl told her mother, and her mother told my grandmother, who told my grandfather, who gravely but fairly confronted me with the accusation, I presented him with my explanation about pulled pigtails."

"And what was your

explanation, Judge Thomas?"

"I told him that while walking behind this girl, on that bumpy, dusty, rural road, I saw two bees settle on her pigtails, and I was alarmed because I feared that they might sting her, and because in our proud but poor and humble community we could not afford the luxury of allergy tests, there was no way of knowing whether she might suffer a severe reaction to their venom. And knowing that we were denied adequate medical facilities, I realized immediate action was necessary. As my grandfather always said, do good fast and do wrong last. So I ran up behind her and pulled her pigtails to dislodge the bees. And that is what I told my grandfather, who listened with the solemn judicial bearing that he was known for, despite his lack of formal education."

"I see. Actually, I don't see, Judge Thomas. What does this have to do with the allegations made by your former aide?"

"That is what I was getting to, Senator. After I told my story, my grandfather thought for a while, rubbed his chin, and finally said: 'Two bees or not two bees, that is the question.'"

"He said what?"

"Two bees or not two bees, that is the question."

"That's what I thought you

said he said."

"Yes, and I was amazed that this simple man could unwittingly duplicate, except for the plural usage of 'bee,' the words of William Shakespeare, the greatest writer in the history of Western civilization, a culture, incidentally, to which I owe unswerving loyalty. Two bees or not two bees, I shall never forget those words. It was then that I realized that if my humble and unlettered grandfather could say something like that, there were no limits to what I might accomplish if I applied myself and was diligent in doing the homework assigned to me by the wonderful nuns."

"Judge Thomas, that is a fascinating story, although I'm not sure I understand it, but could you possibly answer our questions?"

"Yes, Senator. My grandfather exonerated me of all charges. I shall never forget his words. He said: 'Hell hath no fury like a l'il gal whose pigtails were pulled.'"

"Judge Thomas, I give up."

"I thought you might."

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