Headache

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Headache
by Lynette Mallett

"Wit. Wit. This is Chief. We need you to deliver a message..."
"And I'd love to 'zap' any other time, but this is my minute off!"
"Wit, you're the best Impulse Carrier we have on duty. And she needs you."
"Please--let me guess. She's late for class, and she needs a believable excuse for the teacher. No, wait! That poor southern boy sang her a 'Daisy' symphony again, and she needs to pardon herself from riding on his handlebars," Wit quipped. "What is the dilemma now?"

The girl was always burdening her Brain with "urgent" messages coded to Perception Hall. Half of the time, Chief would immediately deny access for her to circulate the information. The other fifty percent of her thoughts were carried by Impulses to the various places in her mind. Consent would be given or denied to "pass" the Ideas. This moment, Wit felt her Idea had to be passed. Their girl entertained a Thought of one condition that would allow her to escape her next class: a HEADACHE. Simply put, she didn't want to take a test fifth hour. Wit calculated this request would take more moments than her usual whims, but this was only because the H.A. needed to be real, since her Mom-figure would definitely be skeptical and test the sincerity of the Girl's ailment--maybe even take her to the Doctor's!

"Chief, I'm ready for the job, and my expectations are high."
"Expectations for what?"
"For your reasoning to clear. I'm the best Impulse Carrier--on or off duty!"

"Wonder!" Chief muttered. "Just stay on your nerve path, away from any Notorious Sidetracker. This plea must be allowed!"
"Yes, sir!" Wit exclaimed with renewed vigor in his attitude. "I'll take my usual route, from Perception Hall to Intuition Center, then through Deliberation and Contemplation Rooms, and I'll even hit the Medi Chamber. From there, should I visit the Realization Office, or head straight for Logic Stores? I know. I'll need Realization first. Then I'll pick up some forms at the Vault, and finish my mission by checking in at the Conclusion Foyer. I'll not stop until I've caused a Headache!"

His journey had begun. The path had been cleared. He would sprint out of harm's way. His motive was clear as a bell--never mind the hackneyed cliches; Wit was approaching the exit from Perception Hall. He retrieved an odd-looking hammer from a nearby shelf and glanced over his shoulder with one final, corny remark, "You can count on me, Chief!"

Following a few Directions, who were holding neon flashers, Wit strode confidently down the corridor to his first destination. It pleased him to find the Intuition Center open, but he had known it would be. Intuition was always alive with activity: bustling secretaries, hurried and harried I.C.'s, and the Intuition ladies themselves. Ringing a fingerbell, Wit signaled for an immediate audience. He was ushered into a room half the size of a microchip, which appeared surprisingly tiny when reviewed from the interior, due to the dark-paneled walls and carpet. Wit didn't seem to notice the darkness. Instead, he strode toward an antique, hand-carved on which sat Ms. Insight, founder and "brains" behind the Center. Her legs were unprofessionally swinging forward with each step Wit took, and the off-beats consisted of her heels colliding with the desk front. Step - thump! - step - thump! - step - THUNK!

"Ouch!" On the last backswing of her legs, Ms. Insight's heel had landed with too much force, and now she was hopping, howling, and rubbing her bruised ankle.

"Insight, I've got the Girl's proposition to pass to you..."

"Ow... I know. Yes, I know all about it. The news came in a microsecond before you arrived. You have my consent, but I must warn you about the Notorious Sidetrackers. One of their agents is trying to
oppose your efforts for the Headache by slyly planting a devious contrathought in your path. I'm not exactly sure what their plan is, but you'd better watch out."

"Thanks for the tip, but I'm positive I won't be needing it," Wit bragged mildly. "The last time the Sidetrackers mingled with me was at a New Day's Eve jam a while back. Yeah, I definitely mangled their nerves. Are you sure your sources were checked okay?"

"This is Insight you're speaking with, Wit. I have the inside info on everything!"

"Then what was Oprah hiding from the Enquirer last week?"

"Continue your mission, Wit."

"Hey - you swore you knew all secrets!" Wit kidded Ms. Insight. He leapt through the doorway to avoid a playful swat in the stomach. Unfortunately, Wit backed into a secretarial assistant. As he bent over to scoop up some scattered papers she had dropped, Wit puzzled over the way she quickly told him to forget the papers and then hurried out the door. He glanced up soon enough to see the secretary's facial features before she scampered away: it was Cate, a Notorious Sidetracker, undercover in the Intuition Center! Still toting the odd hammer, Wit dove for the double-doored exit and flung the left panel open. Cate was racing slightly to the right of Wit's preplanned path. He considered chasing her, but then decided against that impulse, since his logical sense forbade him to. "Besides," he mumbled, "Chief warned me of this urge. I don't want the Girl's message to be lost because of me. Here's lookin' at you, Chief."

A straight yet jagged walkway connected the Center with Wit's next stop, Deliberation Room. As he traveled the length of the passage, Wit noticed, "This must be the Girl's Indecision Hallway." That was, indeed, a correct deduction, but it took Wit a few moments to decide this. Upcoming was the Deliberation Room, with an alley sprouting to its right, bypassing the room. Wit had no inkling of where it led, and he had no intention of knowing, either. Wit needed to enter the Deliberation Room, in order to receive more support for his mission. When he reached the Deliberation entrance, a slight complicatation met him. The doors were locked. Since his prepared course had been to
visit both the Deliberation Room, and then the adjoining Contemplation Room, Wit momentarily despaired at his situation. "I need to deliberately deliberate the deliberation of what deliberative deliberateness I should do," Wit tried to reassure himself. "Whoever locked those doors, though ... Cate!" he exclaimed angrily as he sighted a fleeting speck of her inspiration-flowing red hair around the alley corner. Following closely behind, Wit pursued her down the alley, until she suddenly halted and spun around to face him.

"I know what you want," Cate hissed, "but I'm not going to let your Headache pass!" Then she scooted far into a dark corner of the Girl's Mind, allowing Wit access to wherever the alley led. Did he have enough nerve to find out? It was the sole chance of completing his mission, since he could not turn and journey back. Physically, he could not retrace his steps, since once he had accepted a task, the pathway behind him was erased. More importantly, though, he would never consciously abandon his solemn duty. "Give me a Headache, or I'll flunk the test" was his standing motto.

Eerie sights and sounds crept at the sides of the alley while Wit ventured carefully: Veins pulsating, brain cells moaning horrendously in their dying (Wit hypothesized this condition befell them from an overdose of homework), colorless creatures unnamed and undiscovered by the Girl's world. None could touch or harm Wit, as long as he stepped on his path. For this, Wit was thankful. At last, the outline of a rear door appeared in Wit's sight. A cheerful white light shed its beams in the form of two words: Contemplation Room. To Wit, the sign penetrated the shroud of darkness with the piercing power of the slaughter of the Girl's Sanity cells on test day, or of her Control cells whenever her thoughts turned to the Boy. Wit's breath eased out in relief at this sight; Cate's diversionary efforts had not stopped him this time.

The contemplation Committee eked every particle of patience from Wit's being during the moments it took Wit to convince them of his task. After a brief, yet "sensational," Headache presentation, Reflect, the chairdendrite, became skeptical and called Perception Hall to be totally convinced of the plea. Reflect received a positive answer in
favor of Wit, and he proceeded to grant his consent to the message, amidst Wit’s nervously scuttled comments, such as, "Shouldn’t this be faster?" and, "I wonder why Chief’s response isn’t back yet." From the expression on his face, Wit didn’t seem to welcome Reflect’s caution with satisfaction.

"These things sometimes take longer than you deem necessary," Reflect responded.

Despite Wit’s haste, the plea won total affirmation from the contemplation Committee. Wit continued his journey.

Another lengthy, dimly lit passage brought Wit to the Meditation Chamber where Gu-Grew, the great Impulse Cell, was awaiting Wit’s arrival. It’s humorous, Wit conceded, how Gu-Grew is responsible for the girl’s long-term growth, like maturing enough to stay with the same Boy for more than a day, when it seems he never ages! He sauntered up to Gu-Grew, who was seated in a lotus position in the middle of the immense, yet peaceful domed room.

"Pardon me, Gu, but I need your assistance with one of the Girl’s problems. Could you un-meditate for a micromoment?"

"Speak now, or forever hold your plea," Gu-Grew commanded in a resonating tone.

"May I have your permission to carry the hammer I hold past you, and until the end of my mission, or will you put me in a trance for a hundred years first?" Wit requested in a tone he reserved for his humblest pleas.

"You may, after I offer you a warning - take it or leave it. The end is near, but you must first face opposing forces alone."

"Oh - you mean Cate," Wit deduced after a few milliseconds of consideration.

"Yes. Go."

Wit exited silently, brooding over Gu-Grew’s statement. Nevertheless, Wit had an obligation to fulfill, and he was just regaining his former confidence when a sing-song voice severed the silence surrounding him.

"Hi-ya, Witty!" the voice greeted slyly.

It’s Cate again, Wit realized. He couldn’t see the body that fit
the voice, but he knew it was she. Cate’s going to try to divert me from my path. Well, I won’t be swayed. Wit suddenly noticed a subtle pull on his jacket pocket. Swiftly, Wit clasped his hand around the head of his hammer.

"Leave me, Cate, or I’ll lose it!" Wit complained (threatened) trying not to lose his grasp on the tool.

"I know, you doofus. That’s why I’m trying to ruin you!" Cate screamed in retort. She yanked the handle further out of his pocket.

"I thought you wouldn’t tangle me after what happened two days ago," Wit naively proposed. He maneuvered the hammer so that both of his hands gripped it.

"No - that incident gave me even more motivation for revenge, after you insulted my intelligence and embarrassed me in front of my ‘trackers,’” Cate raged. Then she gasped in terror. Wit expended the final bits of his energy into swinging Cate’s petite frame over the side of his path and into a blackened void. He was encased in a block of silence once more.

Trembling slightly, Wit stooped into the Realization Office, a little amazed that he was not harmed by the encounter with Cate. From there, he received a notice from Chief: "Acknowledgement that you are nearly through with your mission. Wonder! Your progress is quite slow, Wit. Don’t daydream. Get moving!"

Upon arrival at the Vault of Derivations, Wit was greeted by an old friend, Attention. "I heard about your tough assignment, and I figured you’d need a friendly ‘Hi’ on the way back, just to know that you haven’t been forgotten," Attention brightly addressed him.

"I appreciate this, Tent. It got rough in the middle, and then I received an ungrateful message from Chief - but I suppose he didn’t really know what happened."

"Yeah, I understand, Wit. I’ve been there."

I’ve only one last destination before I can call this a minute, Wit remembered. The Conclusion Foyer would be the easiest part of his task, where he could deposit his hammer completing the journey. He conversed shortly with the Judge there as he handed his tool over the counter.
"Wow! This has been my longest assignment! Fifty-eight seconds, thirty-three milliseconds. I’ve seen it all and heard it all, but I still haven’t done it all."

"What haven’t you done?" the Judge naturally inquired.

"I have never had the privilege of pounding the Headache Nerve," Wit replied nonchalantly.

"Nice Oscar-winning try, but that privilege is reserved for those ‘slightly’ above your position."

"That’s all right. I’m out of cracks, anyway, and ready for retirement!"

Later that minute, Wit was finally able to relax at Perception Hall, and think about the work he had accomplished. The Girl had gone home before her test, with an actual Headache. She sure keeps me active in the pain business. Hey! That’s not my area of expertise. Wit did hope, though, that she would duly study for the make-up test, but that was not his concern. His moment had passed. He was finished. The job was done ...

"Wit. Wit. This is Chief. We need you to deliver a message ..."