

Whose Body Is This?

I swear someone stole my body. It must have happened at a time when I wasn't paying attention because not only is my body missing but its been replaced by another of inferior quality. This is a difficult adjustment since my current body is old and from day to day I have no idea what to expect. Do some aches or pains signal a problem or is that simply how an old body feels?

For example, vision became a problem when the phone company reduced the print size in phonebooks. The situation became worse when I called to complain. The customer service person actually denied they had done such a thing. When the conspiracy spread to library books and restaurant menus, I bought glasses.

Next a pain developed in my foot. "It's a gland," my Podiatrist informed me. "You've lost fat on the ball of your foot, removing normal protection around the gland." Now really! I've spent almost my entire life in the battle against fat but of all the places I've tried shedding pounds, my feet have never even made the list.

Skin is another issue. It's useful, keeping one from oozing around, amoeba like. Now it too is a problem. My dermatologist views each new spot through her magnifying glass, pronouncing in a disapproving voice that while this is so far cancer free, it is *from the sun*. "You don't want any more sun," she tells me. Well actually, I no longer want the amount I've already gotten but there doesn't seem to be any way to return the excess.

Then there is the issue of thinning hair, more accurately named traveling hair. It's entirely possible to wake up and find a six-inch long hair has grown from the middle of one's neck during the night. If left alone I have no idea how rapidly it would continue to grow but I suspect that many elders who are found dead in their beds did not die of natural causes at all but were strangled by these mutant hairs.

I think it would help if there were some guidelines about how an old body is supposed to feel. Pediatricians say there is an age when teeth arrive. Is there an age when the teeth leave? If it is normal for bladder control to develop at a certain age, is it normal for one to lose it at another age? I really wonder about that one when I notice today's drugstore shelves.

The problem is that I didn't expect any of this.

"How could it be unexpected?" my granddaughter asks. "There are old people all around. It's not like you people have never seen anyone over forty before."

She's right, although I do get a bit out of sorts when she says "you people" as if we're aliens. Did I mention sleep problems?