

Hormones v/s Horromones

Please hum Carmen Miranda's "I'm having a heat wave, a tropical heat wave" as you read this.

And the saga continues. Are you as tired of this breast cancer story as I am? Well, here is another part. But in this one, I get to glow—literally.

When I was working at Parkview High School, I was going through menopause, and hot flashes were a very common part of my day. I think “The Change” took ten years to complete. “The Change” was not a change. It was an encounter with purgatory four or five times a day.

Two of my co-workers would break into choruses of “Tropical Heat Wave” as I hastily went through the office door, that to anyone else felt like a snowstorm because of the air conditioning, in my shirt sleeves while fanning myself with a file folder. I would have torn off all of my clothes if I could have gotten away with it, but I worked in a high school, and it wasn’t good to scare the adolescents, although the sight of me naked might have reduced the number of sexual encounters between the kids. All of them were walking hormones.

I worked with Ed Hunt. He was the most marvelous Assistant Principal in the world. Kids often told me that he was the only AP who knew that made you feel good about being punished. He was an amazingly positive man with a great manner with kids and one my favorite people in the world. Ed liked to use my office for conferences. It was located in the center part of the school and had comfortable chairs. His office was located in one the farthest buildings on campus, but trouble always happened nearer my section of the school than his. I frequently sat in on the disciplinary conferences, too.

When Ed needed to use my office for a student disciplinary issue, he would knock and almost simultaneously unlock the door. At the time, I had an industrial strength fan. It blew on low, medium, and cyclone. This particular day was one spent in the infernos of hell. I had locked the door, turned the fan to cyclone, and removed my sweater. I admit a pullover sweater was a stupid idea. I should have been in a halter top. I was standing in front of the fan, contemplating filling the cups of my bra with ice, when I heard a knock on the door and the turning of the key. I threw myself against the door, yelling, “Just a minute, Ed!” I barely got my sweater back on when I pulled the door open. There stood Ed with two or three “rounders” who were in trouble. I sat in on the conference, hoping I was not sweating too badly. When they left, I realized I was wearing my sweater inside out.

Let’s fast forward to the part where I am at the part of my cancer treatment that involved not taking my hormones. Yep, are you beginning to hear the faint melody of Carmen’s song. I was off all hormones and taking Evista, which is a prescription hormone blocker. Ductal Carcinoma is an estrogen-fed cancer. In order to starve the cancer, you must cut off its food supply. That was what the doctors told me. It meant going through menopause for the second time. Like the first time wasn’t bad enough,

Evista caused me to burst into flames fifty-five minutes after I swallowed that pill. I thought I was burning the cancer cells from the inside out. Everyone knew I would cut their hands off if they touched the thermostat. I didn't care if it is winter, leave the air conditioner on and overlook the light dusting of snow covering the floors.

I really should dedicate this essay to Ed Hunt, Snell, James, and to all those men who were wise enough to keep the freezer stocked with ice cream, their winter jackets nearby, and their mouths shut.

I was trying to keep the air conditioning at a reasonable temperature. I think forty-five degrees is reasonable, don't you? My boys complained that it was warmer outside in December than it was in the house. Snell would come in and immediately started putting on flannel shirts and heavy socks. One day he put on his heaviest flannel lined jeans. I frequently had to change my night clothes, wringing them out and hanging them to dry. Snell encouraged the cats to sleep next to him because they gave off body heat. James stayed upstairs almost all of the time. He had his winter comforter and a blanket on his bed. He also had a heating pad and a cat that slept next to him. James slept in long sleeved flannel pajamas, but no one said a word of complaint. I could blast furnace their eyebrows off with a sigh.

Have you ever heard of a woman in love having a certain glow? Well, when you are without hormones and going through menopause/cancer treatment/hell you don't glow. You turn beat red, sweat like a pig in heat, and snarl at anyone who gets within five feet of your space. I'll tell you what glow is. When you have immediate internal combustion, you make like a beacon. Men feel warm in your presence, not because of love or lust, but because you have a core temperature of 126 degrees. Ice cubes melt three feet away from "the glow".

Menopause—a pause in the men in your life if they are smart. They leave you alone and set the thermostat at fifty-five degrees. The meanest of men and the most ferocious of animals will cower in fear that at any minute your head will blow off and you will spew vicious statements and threats at them. You are dripping wet with hot, steamy sweat, and you have a headache, but for what? For having ovaries. It isn't right, people. It isn't fair. No man in his right mind would ever say they share the pain, that they empathize with you. They just stay as far away from you as possible and nod yes to anything you growl. I have a pair of cattle emasculators from my grandparents' farm. They hang in our barn. If you have a man who is pooh-poohing your inner industrial furnace, call me. I will lend them to you.