

(vi)Aggravation

You know the thrill is gone when you're halfway through a romantic episode and the three little words you hear are "knock it off," or, like this morning, "give it a rest."

I'm not a big fan of Viagra.

I'm sure it's fine for those "spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" moments, but in general, I think it's just for couples too lazy to put in the heavy lifting. If you're not in the mood, you're not in the mood. Let it go. Life may be short, as they say, but it is wide.

Don't get me wrong, I'm a big believer in better living through chemistry (am pretty sure that's what the Latin inscription, "doctrina lux mentis" on my class ring translates to—it was certainly cross-stitched on enough sorority pillows where I went to college).

But honestly, Viagra's a prescription that was invented for truly tragic post-op outcomes. One time I went out with a pediatric cardio-thoracic surgeon who, by way of small talk over dinner, told me about his rotation in a Chicago burn unit where a guy came in with his penis melted to his leg after a car wreck—and how, when he broke the news to the poor guy's fiancée, she left the hospital and never came back. See. Modern medical intervention was designed for the likes of that. That's the kind of situation where you pray for some sort of bionic miracle ("We have the technology! We can rebuild it!")

If your reproductive organs get sheared off in an unfortunate accident, or inadvertently seared to your leg somehow—by all means, you should probably call a doctor.

Most of us will never have to put in that level of effort.

I like to think I wouldn't be the fiancée who walked outta the hospital and never came back—but then I remind myself that I have left perfectly good men because, say, they confuse (singer/songwriter) Ryan Adams with (Canadian '80s rocker') BRYAN Adams, and then I remember, I am not known for longevity. I remind myself that even a bikini wax requires more commitment than I'm willing to put into an average relationship—at least not one that's more than a few years old.

We're all guilty of it. Because, at the beginning, you actually care what the other person thinks.

At a dinner party the other night, for example, a group of us were all debating the merits of thongs. The men all liked them. The women all thought if they like 'em so much, THEY should wear them (not that any of us wanted to see that; we were eating).

Us women were all (unsuccessfully) trying to get everyone around to the idea that the boy-cut underwear that's (luckily) in style at the moment is the way to go ("they're

like hot-pants!" my pal Mona exclaimed, hoping to muster enthusiasm for the idea, before deciding that the fact that we could all remember hot pants just made us feel old).

I have a drawer-full of thongs, only because, while I don't believe they're something any 40-something woman should be caught dead in, they are also not appropriate donations to the Goodwill. (No way the poor are that needy.)

Reality Truck

So, not wanting to be wasteful, I will occasionally drag one out for a gentleman (booty) caller now and again.

Or I'll bust out some of the lingerie archives, thinking nothing more sentimental or amorous than, "well, it still fits," and if it makes him happy, "okaaay, I guess it doesn't cost me anything.

That's it. That's the romance. I already have the gear. Hate to waste it.

If I'm really feeling ambitious, like yesterday, I'll make him breakfast after, while still wearing the getup. (He said something nice like, "hey, this is every guy's fantasy"—but I think we both know every guy's fantasy is a LOT more hard-core than that and probably involves a couple Nordic 18-year old twins, assorted leather and steel implements, and possibly a small woodland creature. I don't really know, beyond what I see on Skinemax- after-Dark, because my imagination is just not that vivid.)

I even volunteered to let him take the leftover coffee with him in a go-cup (I have a cabinet-full of those styrofoam travel mugs from SuperAmerica), but I could see the little wheels turning in his brain: he wanted to drink the coffee, in the car...buuuut, if he took the cup, he might be committing to bring it back. In a split second he'd calculated that it wasn't worth the risk and just downed the contents before stowing the coffee cup in the dishwasher. (Yeah. They are better at math than we are. I could never manage a cost-benefit/ risk-reward analysis that quickly. I could do it, but I'd need pencil and paper.)

So I'm really NOT that surprised (or even appalled) when I hear "give it a rest" midway through an interlude. Just as I suspect he's not that horrified if the action has to suddenly be suspended because I've developed a charley horse in my thigh.

(I thought yoga would put an end to those, but it hasn't, and I'm starting to think downward-facing-dog doesn't mean what I thought it did. For that, I could use a prescription.) ■