

Midlife

by Joani Reese

In the last two years, Louise has discovered many frightening changes in her body. First, the Zolofit her doctor prescribed her could no longer do the job without a helpful Abilify booster. Next, her eyes turned red and dry, but luckily, she discovered Restasis, and even though her skin has begun to sag around the jaw line, she realizes that along with a daily dose of Oracea for the rosacea that pinks her cheeks, she can slather on Olay Regenerist. Yes, these last two years have been a learning experience. Louise never imagined the risks she'd been taking by only seeing her internist once a year for a physical.

Even suffering all of these conditions, Louise considers herself one of the lucky ones, as she's learned there are pills, drops, and creams for all of her problems. Her doctor is happy to prescribe the new medications she hears about during breaks in the nightly news shows she watches religiously. Tests he scheduled even managed to find a few more problems Louise had not yet considered, so now she's taking care of her cholesterol and high blood pressure with Caduet and her high triglycerides are under control with Lovaza. Because some of these meds give her a severe case of dry mouth, her doctor suggested OraMoist patches: problem solved! She has Blue Cross/Blue Shield with a low deductible for both prescription medications and her regular doctor's visits, so even though she's practically falling apart, she has no worries.

All the trouble began right after Bud walked out two years ago, the day before her fiftieth birthday. Before that day, Louise had never taken a prescription in her life and had always been healthy as a horse. Maybe Bud sensed she was on the cusp of a physical apocalypse when she mentioned one morning over coffee she might have that restless leg syndrome they saw on the TV the night before; maybe that's why he took off with only the clothes on his back and his Joe Montana signed football. He never called or came by the

house for any of his other things. After fifteen good years! Imagine. Whatever.

Louise does not mourn Bud's disappearance; she has her daily schedule of pill taking to keep her busy. Who knows what might happen if she forgets to take any one of these little miracle workers? These days, she watches the nightly news mostly for the commercials, trying to keep ahead of whatever new malady might be creeping up on her. Bombings in Pakistan take a back seat to overactive bladder; global warming is a pale worry compared to potential hypoglycemia.

She's considering switching to Centrum Silver after she saw their ad during CNN's broadcast. The woman in the ad's hair was so beautiful, and she looked so happy! And thank heaven she switched to MSNBC and caught the last of the Boniva ad with that cute Sally Field, or she never would have considered bone loss and called for an appointment this morning. Tonight, she'll watch FOX to make sure she is up to date with all the help available out there for people like her.

Louise makes a list of errands to run after the doctor, writing *Walmart* at the top of the pad and adding *Refills* underneath, including Nasonex (allergy season again!), Imitrex (for those blinding headaches that come whenever she tries to clean out Bud's closet), Zicam, because cold and flu season is right around the corner, and she writes down *Boniva?* in case she's right and the doctor gives her a prescription for bone loss too. Finally, Louise writes down, *ask Dr. Walton about Lyrica for the pain*, and *Lunesta?!!!* because she hasn't had a good night's sleep in months and that beautiful big green moth is so relaxing as it hovers over that sleeping woman's face on the commercial. She checks her supply of Vaniqua, a miracle cream for removing all those pesky menopausal hairs that have begun to spring up in odd places, and she counts her OraMoist dry mouth patches. Plenty left.

Louise wonders if she'll ever have to buy tampons again, thinks she ought to ask the doctor for some Viagra just in case Bud ever realizes the huge mistake he's made and decides to come home.

She's smarter now than she was in all those years before he left, knows now she should have agreed with him that trying Viagra might have helped them both, but back then she'd never realized how much help there was for any problem if a person just studied commercials between the news stories.

She smiles to herself as she grabs her purse and keys from the hook by the back door, knowing no matter what happens from now on, there will always be a pill for that.

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