

A SHORT JOG OVER THE HILL

by
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Spring arrives and — along with robins chirping, flowers budding and crabgrass sprouting — I become aware of midriff bulge, flabby thighs, hippo hips and a double chin. I have outgrown most of my dresses, skirts, jeans, nightgowns and pantyhose. If I owned a pup tent, no doubt it, too, would be a tight fit.

But not to worry. There is hope, I am told, in the form of jogging, which — in addition to making me thin again — promises to decrease my chances of heart attack, build my muscle-tone, improve my mental attitude, expose my lungs to therapeutic quantities of God's good fresh air, perk up my sex life and cure a multitude of chins.

Off I go to the sporting goods store where I buy a warm-up suit, athletic socks, fannypack, pedometer, can of mace (for discouraging vicious dogs), whistle (for scaring off muggers and rapists) and Reeboks. Total cost: \$343.72.

At last I am equipped to jog. I drive to the outskirts of town so I can enjoy the rural atmosphere while I exercise (as well as minimize the possibility of being seen in my jogging costume by someone who knows me).

I park the car by the side of a narrow, unpaved road. The air is balmy. The sky is blue. The grass . . . but enough sight-seeing, it is time to begin jogging.

I am feeling great! My arms and legs are pumping rhythmically, my muscle-tone seems to be building rapidly and . . . is it my imagination or is my double chin already receding? I am breathing in great gulps of God's good fresh air, my mental attitude is improving and I can only guess what wonderful things must be happening to my sex life.

I am feeling one with nature: calm, serene, without a care. I am transcending the physical, and yet suddenly I sense a rock in my left Reebok. No matter, I'll just stop and take it out. I am amazed at how much jogging has done for me already. And in only half a block.

Now I am jogging again. I almost feel sorry for the old gray Buick sitting stolidly by the side of the road, incapable of knowing the bliss that physical activity brings. I jog on, conscious only of spiritual concerns, leaving physical considerations as far behind me as the Buick (now a block and a half away).

But what is this? I've discovered a huge German Shepherd in violation of the leash law. The beast is jogging faster than I. I hurriedly note that he hasn't reached my high degree of spiritual perfection; he is definitely operating on a physical level. Hunger appears to be his driving force.

Now I am sprinting. The dog is gaining on me. Animal lover though I am, I reach in my fannypack for the can of mace. I reach . . . Where is that can? The last time I saw it, I remember, was in the front seat of the car (parked a good two and a half blocks behind me).

We race on, the dog and I. I wish I had a baton to pass to him, or a stick for him to fetch. My tibia, I fear, makes a poor substitute. But lo! A car approaches. If I can just keep running, I'll be saved. Preserved to jog another day.

The car coming toward us decreases its speed. The driver must recognize sheer terror when he sees it. He leans his head out the window as he drives slowly by. "Nice dog you got there, Lady."

My last hope. Gone. The race is almost over. The dog is obviously an expert at this running business, while I have barely got my Reeboks dusty. I'll run ten

more steps . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . then turn to fight . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . I'll sell my life dearly . . . 7 . . . 8 . . . 9 . . . 10. I'm stopped.

The surprised dog shoots past me, puts on the brakes, then faces me and starts to circle. I rotate with him. I won't let him get me from behind. He's slowing his pace. This is it!

He holds up his paw and grins. He only wants to shake hands, the big pussycat!

I have jogged enough for one day. Killer — for such I call him, now that we're good friends — accompanies me during the four block walk back to the car. I am glad to have his company, because muggers and rapists rarely attack women with five-foot-tall German Shepherds for companions, and I don't have enough wind left to blow my whistle anyway.

The Buick lurches as I drive home. There's nothing wrong with the car; my quivering leg muscles are causing my accelerator foot to send erratic messages to the engine. Confused motorists are staring at me. I wish I had a sign in the back window to explain the phenomenon. "Jogger on Board" would suffice.

I gratefully pull into our driveway. Oh no! Steps. Two of them! As I slowly climb the steps and enter the house, I curse myself for placing the couch so far away from the front door.

I rest on the couch until hunger compels me to visit the kitchen where a half-dozen fudgesicles in the freezer have my name on them. Luckily, I expended so many calories jogging that I needn't feel guilty about eating.

One fact I have discovered about jogging can be described in two words: Feeding Frenzy. Fudgesicles. Eaten. Pint of Premium Rocky Road Ice Cream. Eaten. Family-size bag of potato chips. Eaten. The kids' left-over Easter candy. Eaten.

It is too bad that Snow White the Bunny, who looks absolutely scrumptious, is a long-time family pet. If I had only brought Killer home with me, I could have blamed her disappearance on him. As it is, Snow White is safe, but hungry. I ate all of her carrots.

It is evening of the day of my first jogging experience. My husband brought the Colonel home for dinner and Kentucky Fried Chicken bones now grace our dining table. The kids are asleep in their beds, and I recline on the living room couch. Freshly bathed and shampooed, I am wrapped in my robe and the commingled odors of Estee Lauder and Ben-Gay.

My husband gives me a tender, questioning glance. I assure him that tonight our sex life would be terrific — if I just weren't so tired. Romance is impossible, I explain, when feet hurt, back aches, leg muscles cramp and lungs have a surfeit of fresh air.

He views me with alarm. "Are you going to continue to jog?" he wants to know. His face falls when I say, "Yes."

But brightens considerably when I add, "Annually."