River Runs Dry

After surgery, sex is the last thing on her mind

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If you think having a boyfriend can ruin your sex life, try surgery. I recently went through my first major surgery. Yes, it was time to finally sever my relationship with Herman. For those of you who don't know, Herman is a cyst that had affectionately attached himself to my right ovary. But he had become very possessive, doubling in size and painfully crushing the ovary and the tube attached to it. Smothering, hurtful and financially draining—just like many of the relationships I've been in.

I decided to end my liaison with Herman when the doctor told me he was likely malignant. Just what I needed, as if having HIV wasn't enough. I knew cancer would push me over the edge. Fortunately, I've never been confronted with AIDS in the mirror, but with cancer there was no question that I would have to watch my body deteriorate. Call me vain, but all I could think about were the sympathetic looks I'd get after losing my hair to chemo.

D-Day found me in pre-op, getting prepped. Fun and exciting gear such as support hose, shower cap and IV line in place, I was ready to be sliced and diced. As they wheeled me down the hallway on a gurney, I said some last-ditch prayers. Once in the operating room, I found myself surrounded by some serious folks, and after a panic attack and a heavy sedative shot into my arm, I counted backward from 10 until everything went black.

After the operation, my favorite surgeon bent over the bed and whispered, "No cancer." I gave her a big, wet smooch that she didn't seem to appreciate. And that was the last time I felt like kissing anyone.

It's been two months since the surgery. The scar, which fortunately follows a cute little hairline from my pubis to my belly button, has almost healed. It should have been a work of art, due to the resident's desire to be a Hollywood plastic surgeon, but because I had two staph infections and numerous complications, it's no longer perfect. Instead, it worms upward and weaves crookedly in the direction of my navel. My 40 stitches are slowly dissolving, and I am now off the morphine pump, the antibiotic, the painkillers and the sedatives…but I still don't want to have sex.

It could be that I'm still in flux with my relationship. But I'm not attracted to anyone, not even myself. It's like something died down there. Could it have been too many strangers poking and

prodding my pussy for weeks previous to the operation? Naaah, I'm used to that. Is it menopause? Please, I'm too young. Is it having one less ovary and tube? Maybe. Whatever it is, some profound psychic sexual healing is called for.

I was put into a deep, dreamless sleep for the surgery. What I believe happened is that I left my body during that time and it has been very painful to return. I truly never experienced pain as excruciating as I have since this procedure. They cut all the muscles in my stomach, and you don't realize how much you use 'em till you lose 'em. Everyday activities, like taking a poop, had me tearing the toilet paper holder off the wall. Having to pee felt akin to having jumper cables hooked up to my nipples.

Four weeks after the surgery, the stitches broke and the scar opened. I had to change the dressing every day. Seeing the raw, bloody wound was terrifying, a hellish vision that haunts me. I feel exposed and so protective of my fragile belly. Like a pregnant woman on a subway, I don't want anyone to touch me.

In all the time I've had HIV, I've dealt with a slew of emotions—terror, despair, rage—but this is different. I somehow feel less of a woman—old, used up, worn out and so vulnerable that I want nothing inside of me. I want to be alone. Just call me ScarPussy.

When I asked my man how he'd feel if we never had sex again, his face said it all: "Later, babe." I've always vowed that I would never force myself to have sex. I've healed from rapes and sexual abuse, but now I need to go deeper. It will take a concerted effort to bring back my sexual feelings—not just for my relationship, but for me. We are all sexual, and our sexuality helps us stand tall (push-up bra or not). My sex goddess is sleeping off the effects of the morphine, and I need to wake her gently, bring her back and incorporate the scars into my sexuality.

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