Nair-Death Experience

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I was one of those lucky youngsters to begin puberty at an early age. When I was in the fifth grade, I remember displaying my newly-sprouted armpit hair to my friends who lacked such premature masculinity as I.

“Check it out. Testosterone, mmm hmm.”

Poor souls. They’d catch up eventually.

However, this feeling of superiority gradually faded as I grew into my teens. I began noticing how often I had to shave, which was a great deal more compared to most guys my age. My neck was (and still is) in a constant state of irritation, and before long I found myself yanking hairs from places I felt they shouldn’t be. Pompous ass.

Suddenly, I was eighteen and had arranged a date with Pretty Q at the skating rink, the dilapidated yet retro-classy Foot Steps. I felt as though I needed to be smooth in more ways than one. So, I hopped into my red Cavalier (the Cockmobile, as it was later to be dubbed by my future pill-popping Barbie boss at Spencer Gifts, the only rock star I’ve ever known), drove to Wal-Mart, and purchased a bottle of Nair for Men.

When I got home, I glided in phantom-like fashion to the bathroom without saying a word to my parents. I didn’t want them to inquire as to what was in the plastic shopping bag, nor did I care to explain if they happened to notice. I took off my shirt and began reading the directions on the label.
As I recall, I was to remove the rolling apparatus from the top of the container, unscrew the plastic cap underneath, twist the roly-thingy back into place, and squeeze a liberal amount of the rotten-granny, cucumber melon scented goop on my chest in a thick and even layer. So, that’s what I did. I then waited ten minutes for the stuff to take effect, all the while thinking of the magnificent reaction I’d get from Q upon witnessing my new, bare, perfectly pre-pubescent white chest. Confident ass.

As I was sitting on the toilet waiting for the Nair to work its magic, I began skimming over the “don’t do this” list on the label. My eyes happened to rest on one, singular statement in bold type: “DO NOT APPLY TO NIPPLES.” My heart collapsed as my eyes instantly darted from the label to my nips, covered in a thick layer of man-eating lotion. Shit. Oh boy. Oh shit. My thoughts were overwhelmed with visions of carnivorous oil-slicks, slowly devouring the flesh of their happy-go-lucky summertime victims. Skin dissolving, eyes melting, skeletal hands reaching helplessly toward the sky, pleading in vain for quick release... The visuals were too much, and I began to panic. I immediately stripped off my clothes and scrambled into the shower.

A funny thing happened once the warm jets of water hit my chest. My nipples, without warning, burst into flames. I was terrified, naked and wet with my teats ablaze. My shrieks of pain must have reached the ears of nearby coyotes, for a distant howling ensued and became the perfect accompaniment to my ear-
shattering cries. Had Brian Eno been standing outside the bathroom window with a mini-cassette recorder, I’m sure he would’ve wept with joy and achieved an immediate boner.

“I call it ‘Music for Exorcisms.’ Another ambient concept that I’m certain will liven up that house party you’re throwing this weekend. Needle on the record!”

An unexpected, fervent knocking at the door interrupted my nude dance of death.

“Are you okay in there?” my mother asked, probably thinking I had finally inherited her knack for blowing up the toilet six times a day.

I yanked open the shower curtain, and a rush of cool air slapped my chest with such brute force I felt as though I had been reprimanded by a red-hot nun wielding a frozen ruler.

“Oh, ye-ea-h” I shouted in mousy tremolo. “I just, uh, I just slipped and banged my knee really hard on the metal bar thing here. I’m good, thanks.”

“Ah, okay,” she replied, accepting my lie and ignoring thoughts of all the weird things which could be taking place in the bathroom. “Well be careful. You’re kinda fragile, kid.”

Once I heard her footsteps gradually fade along with her laughter, I attempted to remove the Nair from my chest as quickly as possible, splashing water all over the place like an A.D.D-affected child playing with a garden hose. I grabbed a washcloth from the edge of the tub and wiped the remainder of the Nair from
my skin. At this point, I didn’t give a damn whether or not it had done the job. I was too concerned with my scorched, throbbing nipples, now harder than an elderly man with a prescription and completely white.

After gently patting myself dry with a clean towel, I looked at myself in the mirror. Scattered areas of my chest were bare but covered with tiny red spots that itched and burned like an alcoholic yeast infection. Other areas were plastered with crinkled, brittle hairs, flaking off with every shift in movement. The charred remains of my nipples were white except for the very tips, which were blood red and pulsating with every beat of my defeated teenage heart. I soon discovered, to my cynical amusement, that the only comfortable way to wear a shirt was to pinch and pull it away from my chest. My parents’ eyes never strayed from the television screen as I strutted through the living room on my way out, flawlessly executing the Madonna cone-bra impression.

On a brighter note, the date at Foot Steps was more successful than the actual preparation beforehand. After thoroughly explaining the details of my recently-diagnosed condition, pectoral cancer (advancing at a rapid pace, six months tops), and the grueling chemotherapy treatment I had just undergone, Q looked at my raw, splotchy chest with sympathetic, hungry eyes and said, “Mmm, let’s have sex.”

Somewhere in the night, coyotes howled and Eno bowed as the Cockmobile swayed to and fro.