



HIGH

**Presented to Toastmasters
November 2009**

I love getting high, don't you?

I don't mean from smoking weed or downing strawberry daiquiris—although I'm certainly not one to refuse a good margarita. I'm talking about a runner's high. That delicious euphoria you get from pushing your body places it does NOT necessarily want to go.

I'm an outdoor runner. My favorite place to run locally is the Seaside boardwalk. Being there is a buffet for the senses. I love the smell of the briny sea air; sometimes the air is thick with the fragrance of salt, and I literally stand there and breathe it in. The sound of waves crashing on the shore; it's hypnotic. I love watching the dune flora change with the seasons; in the fall, these small mountains of sand are blazing with gold and orange flowers; I drink in the colors.

And when temperature permits, I love ending my run by throwing off my shoes and darting into the surf; the cool water soothes my aching feet. But just as overindulging at the punch bowl can lead to sweater mouth the next morning, so, too, does runner's high have its price—particularly for someone like me.

Why? Because some would refute that what I do is running. Some would better describe what I do as the old-lady shuffle, intermittently punctuated by a face plant. You see, the mechanics of running require that you pick up your feet. If you ignore that little detail, as I often do, and you're shuffling along the Seaside boardwalk, as I frequently am, you can snag your shoes on a jutting nail, or an uneven board, or a skittish feral cat.

Even the leg of a running companion that's edged into my running space has catapulted me into a nosedive. And sometimes, I just seem to trip on nothing more than air

The rise and fall of Lisa is not a pretty thing.

We're not talking dainty, feminine stumble and graceful roll to standing position. We're talking LURCH, FLAIL, THWACK. But that's just the beginning. Now that I'm lying there, nose to the ground, the humiliation sets in

Who saw me? Is it someone I know? Will he recognize me, or GASP!, try to help me?

My knees may be bloody and my hands may be full of splinters, but it's the ego that has suffered the worst blow. I wrest myself off the ground, limp into some semblance of a trot, and pretend like nothing happened. But the gaping new holes in running tights give me away ...

Which leads me to my next point ...

The fall of Lisa does not come cheap.

How many running tights have taken a hit on the Seaside boardwalk? How many holes have I collected while skidding across the boards? Over the course of 20 years ... many. I'm very particular about my running tights. They have to provide the perfect combination of softness, stretch, and sweat absorption. And of course, the pickier you are, the more you'll pay. So I pay through the nose ... or through the holes, if you will ... to achieve MY high.

I've also paid tooth and nail ... or toenail, if you will ... for this intoxication. Imagine being a foot that's jammed inside a shoe that's pounding, pounding, pounding for four or five hours straight, as these feet are during a marathon. *Asphalt, concrete, the steel grates of a bridge*—you're hitting it all.

It's hot in there; you're working hard, and you're swelling up from the beating. So things start getting pretty cramped. Now your toes, once free to wiggle and squirm inside the toe box, are all cooped up. They're hammering against the front of the shoe. You don't necessarily focus on that pain, because frankly, EVERYTHING hurts.

Your legs are also taking a good thrashing and your thighs feel like someone has stomped on them with combat boots. Your lungs ache from breathing so hard for so long. The skin under your jog bra is rubbed raw from all the abrasion. So you don't know your feet are in such bad shape until ...

You finish the race and survey the damage. You discover, as I did after one race, that you've lost three toenails. Once those toenails grow back, they will never look the same again. No pedicurist or bottle of red polish will ever pretty them up the way they used to be. But that's okay ... these are working toes, not runway-model toes.

What price will you pay for a good high?

Me, I'll pay the price of skinned knees, skin abrasions, splintered hands, holey tights, and uglier-than-sin toenails.

And if that's not enough, I'll throw in my crushed ego.