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By

Rosemar Y Frisino T oohey

**WHY I LIKE IT:** *Acting Drama Editor EZRA NEIGHORS writes: Picture this: the year is 2082 and the end of traffic accidents, road rage, robbery, burglary, homicide, rape, crime (oh my!) as we know it has been discovered. Say whaaaaat? The cost? One god damn little hormone. No biggie, right? Think thrice. In this perfectly timed flipping of the script on what we believe about bodily autonomy, Rosemary Frisino Toohey crafts a poignantly sobering message through the deliverance of One Little Hormone. (Spacing is playwright's own.)*

## One Little Hormone

By Rosemary Frisino Toohey

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### CHARACTERS

MARCIA...female, any race, 40s-50s. Sober, thoughtful.

TESS...female, any race, 30s. Excited, delighted.

AZEMA...female, any race, 20s. Equally excited.

### TIME

2082

### SETTING

An office.

Lights up on MARCIA, pacing.

TESS enters in a rush, carrying a laptop and a big stack of files.

MARCIA

Well?

TESS

It worked. It really worked. The numbers are fantastic. Look at these stats. Butte, Montana. After just three months, traffic accidents down seventy-two percent.

MARCIA

Domestic violence?

TESS

Almost zero.

MARCIA

What about Newark?

TESS

Even better. Check out these crime numbers. Robbery, burglary, homicide, rape, all down dramatically.

MARCIA

And Fort Worth?

TESS

Could be our biggest success. Nine-one-one calls plummeting, hospital emergency rooms practically empty on a Saturday night.

MARCIA

No bar fights, I guess.

TESS

In all three cities, car crashes became fractionally insignificant. And road rage? Zip, zero, nada. Who would have thought our little experiment could bring about such dramatic....

TESS (cont'd.)

results?

MARCIA

You did, obviously. You met the challenge.

TESS

But it was your idea to begin with.

MARCIA

Yes. I guess this is the moment to tell you I never thought we'd pull it off.

TESS

Well, zeroing in on the recipe did take us a while. Teasing out the edamame was the big challenge. Too much was overwhelming, too little didn't work.

AZEMA enters.

MARCIA

Have we got the appointment?

AZEMA

We're down for Friday, the twenty-first, at 10:20. They're fitting us in between a budget meeting and a welcome home for the Martian mission.

TESS

You got through to one of her staff members?

AZEMA

Yes, finally. Her Chief of staff.

TESS

You didn't tell him?

AZEMA

Of course not. I was deliberately vague with him.

TESS

But just imagine what her reaction will be when she hears about this?

AZEMA

As you said in the beginning, Marcia, it's imperative that we get the White House on board.

MARCIA

Well, I pulled every string I could, but I'm no politician. I just don't know how it's going to work out.

AZEMA

Come on. When we present the science to her, when we show her the stats, how can she refuse? No woman in her right mind could turn her back on this.

MARCIA

I'd like to think no man in his right mind would either. But then again...

AZEMA

Well, they've been putting fluoride in the water for ages.

MARCIA

Preventing cavities is one thing. This...is something else.

TESS

But just imagine, all we have to do is implement this one little change and---

MARCIA

It's a *big* change, Tess.

TESS

I'm well aware of that. But if we do it, if we pull it off, war will simply cease to be. Can you imagine? I mean if they'd done this back in the twentieth century? The bloodshed that might have been prevented...

MARCIA

Yes, it's mind-boggling. But all that is history. And no one wants to look in the rearview mirror. We've got to focus on today. It's twenty-eighty-two and the dynamic changes this could bring...I have to say, it gives me pause.

TESS

*Could bring?*

MARCIA

One step at a time, Tess. I'm telling you, it's not going to be a slam dunk. Now. First of all, have you brought in all the files? Every computer hard-drive? Every---

TESS

Sure, sure. It's all here.

MARCIA

Were there any surprises in the statistics? Anything we didn't expect to see?

AZMEMA

Well, we tried to focus on every possibility, imagine every conceivable effect of messing with the water.

TESS

What we did learn was that we might need extra intensified agents for certain locales.

MARCIA

Such as?

TESS

The Pentagon, the military academies. Plus, there were a few other little anomalies. Right, Azema?

AZEMA

Most of the NFL teams recorded a significant drop in attendance. Mixed martial arts also took a hit. That sounds funny, doesn't it?

TESS

But beer and liquor sales rose dramatically. Our guess is, maybe guys were bellying up to the bar when that old feeling wasn't quite getting them there.

AZEMA

Still, when you look at these stunning results, the murder rate plummeting, traffic fatalities dropping, crime a fraction of what it once was...imagine. We just eliminate this one little hormone and the world becomes an entirely different place.

TESS

Absolutely. The numbers show dramatically that---

MARCIA

But let's not forget. People aren't numbers. Do you really think everyone is just going to switch gears on this and not even blink? I'm telling you, the heavy lifting is ahead of us.

TESS

Still, you can't deny---

MARCIA

I want to hear the negatives.

TESS

Marcia---

MARCIA

If we don't acknowledge the negatives, you can bet our critics will. And they'll do it big time.

TESS

Okay, okay. Eliminating the hormone, or even significantly reducing it can lead to weakness and lowered energy levels.

MARCIA

What's the range?

TESS

Six to eight percent in some cases.

MARCIA

Anything else?

AZEMA

There were also some cognitive issues that came into play. And in some instances...cases of depression which could be...fairly serious.

TESS

But we anticipated all that going into it. I mean, there are always going to be problems, unforeseeable problems any time there's a dramatic medical advance.

MARCIA

"A dramatic medical advance." Yes. And what about the elephant in the room?

AZEMA

You mean...

MARCIA

The guy-ness of guys. The manliness of men. Traditionalists of both sexes will be up in arms.

AZEMA

That's cute. "Up in arms."

MARCIA

There's nothing "cute" about it.

TESS

Come on, Marcia, what are you saying? This is your baby.

MARCIA

I know it was.



TESS

Was? What do you mean?

AZEMA

When you recruited all of us for this project, you said---

MARCIA

I'm anticipating the fallout. If we proceed with this we are---

TESS

*If* we proceed? I don't believe what I'm hearing. This was your idea.

MARCIA

I'm well aware of that. I'm thinking of the repercussions.

TESS

Now? After we've done all this work?

AZEMA

All we've been waiting on were the numbers and now that we've got them, they're absolutely stunning, all across the board.

MARCIA

I understand that, Azema.

AZEMA

Then what---

MARCIA

Look, monkeying around with water supplies in a couple of cities is one thing. To do this on a national scale...that's something else.

AZEMA

You're saying you want to wait?

TESS

But our teams are all ready to go. Sarah's gang in LA, Annie's team in Denver, Alexandra's cohort in Atlanta and Madge's unit in New York. Am I supposed to tell them it's all on hold?

AZEMA

Plus, at the very top, we've got a woman in the White House. You know how long that's taken. What if she's not re-elected?

MARCIA

You're talking politics again, and as I said---

TESS

Besides, it's taken us years to get the balance right, so no one could detect the mint, sniff the licorice...

MARCIA

I have nothing but praise for your work and that of the entire team. It's been excellent, stellar. You've hit every mark you set.

AZEMA

I don't understand. Then, why are we now---

TESS

You've lost your nerve. Is that it? You've absolutely lost---

MARCIA

I haven't lost anything. I'm thinking. And what I'm thinking is...yes, we can do this. The question is...should we? When this gets out, when they find out what we're talking about, it's going to be---

AZEMA

But we've been super-careful. There's not been a single word in the media---

MARCIA

Not yet. It's only a matter of time.

AZEMA

But what about the massive campaign we wrote, still under wraps of course, so that when that time comes, we can educate people and explain---

MARCIA

Look, have either of you read what it was like back in the twenties?

AZEMA

The twenties?

MARCIA

Twenty-twenty-two, when they put the brakes on abortion. Massive protests all across the country, upsets in the election, demonstrations.

TESS

But this is for the common good. Think of all the lives that would be saved.

MARCIA

That's exactly what they said back then. People from one end of the country to the other were protesting that science was doing things it shouldn't. And on the other side of the equation, women were adamant that their bodies were their own. What right had the government to deny their right to abortions? "Hands off my body, don't mess with my womb." Can you understand that this is the same thing?

AZEMA

But after all this time, all our work, what are you saying?

MARCIA

I'm saying there's a price to be paid with all of this. And I don't know if people are ready to---

TESS

What price? What's the price of peace? From street corner fights to conflict on the battlefield, how can you possibly question the value of---

MARCIA

We are talking about a chemical agent that would tamp down testosterone for every male in the country. Are we ready to face that? Is everybody in this country ready to face that? We're going into people's bedrooms. Can you both see that?

Pause.

AZEMA

What if we introduced it gradually? Started slowly? Maybe a third of the component to begin with and then...

MARCIA

Azema, once you start there's no going back.

AZEMA

So you're saying we just...stop?

TESS

Because nobody's ready to save lives, put the brakes on streetcorner violence, or bring an end to school shootings and all the rest of it?

MARCIA

Think about it. This will upset everybody's applecart.

Pause.

AZEMA

What if we got congress to vote on it? Put it on the ballot maybe?

MARCIA

Azema, there are politicians out there who would put our heads on a platter.

AZEMA

But the president, she would have to---

MARCIA

You *do* know she's trying to get re-elected, right?

Pause.

MARCIA (cont'd.)

Look. Maybe some time in the future, maybe when we're all---

TESS

But this would be totally revolutionary! Think of what it would mean!

AZEMA

And how can we wait for the future? When will that be?

MARCIA

Put it on the desk, Tess. Put it all on the desk.

Pause.

TESS

Maybe when the rivers of blood have stopped running in the streets, maybe then we can--

MARCIA

Just put it down. Put it all on the desk.

TESS lays her thick stack of files on the desk.  
All three women stare at the files.  
Lights slowly down.

END OF PLAY

**THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS:** *To me, a play is always a "what if?" And the what ifs are what drive me to the keyboard. Certainly, I am not alone in the dismay I feel seeing the growing level of violence in this country. And that violence is perpetrated overwhelmingly by males...old men, young men, boys. A writer has just one weapon---words---and there don't seem to be any words to get some guys, whatever their age, to resist selling scores with a gun, or even a half-ton truck. As a heterosexual female, I truly love the manliness of men, but what's behind all the violence? Is it that one little hormone? And is there anything we can do about it?*

**AUTHOR BIO:** Rosemary Frisino Toohey has had nearly 300 productions of her plays around the world. She's produced on 4 continents and in 40 US states. In London she won top honors as Audience Favorite in the British Theatre Challenge and in New York she won the Next Generation Playwriting Contest. She tied as Gold Medal Winner in the Italian American Theatre of Chicago's First Playwright Competition, and she's won the Baltimore Playwrights

Festival three times. Nine of her comedies are published and three of her dramas have been honored with Artist grants from the Maryland State Arts Council. She is currently penning the book, music and lyrics of her second musical. Frisino Toohey is a member of The Dramatists Guild of America and SAG/AFTRA. There's more at [www.frisinotoohey.com](http://www.frisinotoohey.com)