

D.G. FULFORD

MUCH ADO ABOUT SOMETHING

I'm in the mood for hate (simply because you're near me)

I have been in a bad mood lately. A very bad mood.

Consequently, I have not been fun to be with. I have been negative and surly, and probably hurtful to those who have strayed onto my path.

It's not like they haven't had fair warning, though. My body lingo has been a veritable surgeon general's report. I sit around down in the mouth and scowling, with my arms crossed across my chest.

Generally, when I get like this, I make like a sick animal and take myself out of circulation. I drag off to my hide-out and make sure all my turrets are manned. If I have to go out, I construct an invisible shield around myself in order to deflect human contact.

An example. My friend Moose — my closest, dearest friend who I discuss every living detail of my life with — has been looking for a reason to vacate from her Boston home. The other night she asked me if I'd like her to visit on my birthday.

"No!" I said.

"No?" she said.

"I'm just in a bad mood. No!" I said.

"But your birthday's not until May!" she told me.

"It's a very bad mood," I said.

But locally, isolation isn't possible, so I've switched to the active bad mood mode. I have been mouthing off and picking fights, like the devil's Typhoid Mary. It was in this "head," as we used to say, that I found myself in the mediator's office.

Frequent readers of this column know that I've spent a lot of time there over the past year. My husband and I have been separated forever and have been trying to work out a humane divorce.

(All you amateur psychologists can forget your brilliant theories, though. Yes, this bums me, but no, not totally. It is an old wound and not the full cause of my foul humor.)

The mediator is cool; one of those down-to-earth, very smart ex-hippie chicks. She wears Birkenstocks and big, silver earrings and is comfortable to be around.

Bad Bear me, though, is real sick of the go-to-mediation routine. We are nearing the end, and enough already.

"Let's speed this up," I said the other day in my most unpleasant manner. "Let me make it easy. Whatever the questions are, the answers are 'No, no, no and no.'"

"How about 'Yes, yes, yes and yes?'" said the mediator, in an effort to cheer up the cheerless.

I scowled at her. Then she broke into song.

"I've something in my pocket," she sang.

I looked at her somewhat quizzically.

"It belongs across my face," I sang in a trembling voice.

"And I keep it very close at hand in a most convenient place," she sang.

I looked at her. She looked at me. The words bubbled up from our subconscious minds, where they had been laying dormant since we were both in the first grade.

Quick math: the mediator and I are both ex-hippies. We were in first grade in about 1882.

Soon we were singing a happy duet.

"I'm sure you couldn't guess it, if you guessed a long, long while. So I'll take it out and put it on. It's a great, big Brownie smile!"

Meanwhile, my soon-to-be ex-husband is looking at us like we've both gone mad.

What does he know? He wasn't a Brownie! He wasn't trained to be helpful, kind and considerate. He wasn't taught to smile, no matter what the cost.

Maybe this is why he is a solid citizen; the picture of emotional security, while I am a walking Blue Meanie, still rebelling from her Brownie past.

But maybe not. Anyway, I feel better now, so who really cares. And come to think of it, you know when my mood lifted?

When I started singing. All together now!

"I've something in my pocket . . ."

D.G. Fulford's column appears Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday in L.A. Life.