

On fire: the burning sensation in my hands

by Lev Raphael



Caption:

"Despite two surgeries I'm not free. The burning sensation in my hands has not been fixed." Photo: ©mrmohock / Adobe Stock

On Fire: "The burning sensation in my hands"

Lev Raphael describes the chronic hand burning sensation he feels in his hands despite two reconstructive surgeries.

I shouldn't think of [Diana Ross and the Supremes](#) when my hands hurt, but I do. I can't help it. Their greatest hits was the first record album I bought for myself way back when I was only fourteen. A double album that came with a giant poster inside.

I didn't have to wait for their songs that I'd memorized to play on my little transistor radio in its beige carrying case made of something that definitely was not leather. Those brilliant little songs were now mine whenever I needed them. Ross's sad sweet voice, those rousing choruses....

I didn't know anything about the love that the Supremes said was like "a burning sensation."

But that's what happens to me now decades later, in both my hands. That's what was happening in each hand *before* surgery: arthritis and bone spurs in my thumbs waking me up at night like a nagging fear that you forgot to lock the car you left in the driveway.

Painkillers helped, briefly, but that wasn't enough.

Recovery from the reconstructive surgery was agony, even once I was rid of the cast. With months of physical therapy, I thought I'd be free since the post-op pain eventually eased.

But I'm not free. A few years after both operations, I can feel the burning when I've picked up something too heavy. I can feel the burning when I shovel even light, fluffy snow.

I can feel the burning when a storm is coming--or when it's going. I can feel the burning when I try to open a bottle or can. I can feel the burning when I'm holding a book the wrong way, whatever that is. I can feel the burning for no damned reason at all.

Like the Supremes' song goes: "I can't stop the fire."



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The author of 27 books in genres from memoir to mystery, Lev Raphael has dreamed about being a writer since he fell in love with storytelling in second grade. Living his dream, he's even seen his fiction and essays become homework, thanks to university syllabi from around the country.