

Creating Youth

by Eleanor

Creating Youth

When my youngest brother and his soon-to-be bride asked me to be in their wedding as a bridesmaid, I looked at the others they had chosen to be part of their wedding party, and decided (since I was clearly the oldest) to do something radical (for me) so I wouldn't stand out as mother of the bride rather than sister of the groom. I went to a hair salon and asked to have my hair dyed. When you're over 50 and those around you have no grey hair or laugh lines, it's clear that something drastic is needed.

While I'm not naive enough to think that this is something radical in the world of cosmetics and looking younger, going to have my hair changed was just that for me - I cut my own hair (or my mother would sometimes), I hardly wore makeup except for some lipstick and occasionally mascara, and my youthful red hair had become a soft silver shade.

So in checking with the hair dresser, I told her that's what I wanted - return me to the beautiful red hair of my youth. We looked at samples, she thoroughly ran her fingers through my hair, and told me the possibilities - I could be a strawberry color, deeper auburn with sunny highlights, lovely, Hollywoodish Maureen O'Hara - you name it, my hair was the beginning of a younger me. I practically closed my eyes and pointed to the chart, that's how difficult it was to choose. So she chose for me - and the process began. The towels, the uncomfortable head into the sink position, looking upward into the face of the expert while she chatted away, the intense smells, and then looking at my unadorned self in the mirror as she worked away - slopping a goopy liquid into my wet hair, continuing her monologue designed, I'm sure, to quiet my anxiety. I honestly don't remember the rest - I'm sure my mind has pocketed all that happened from this point on into a dark place that's under lock and key, because when I emerged from all that was done, I was a glorious intense, shocking pink torch, lighting up the very corners of that salon!. I was a beacon to all those ships needing a light through the fog-shrouded coastline, a clown's cotton-candy tufts ready for the circus parade, every woman's nightmare. Everyone in the room tried not to look - I could sense the pity and stifled laughter.

Is this permanent? Do I have to wait until it grows out? Do I shave my head and wear a wig? ... what do I do ... the wedding is a week away. Don't worry, she said. I can just wash it out and we'll try again. Oh no - can I go through this again? Wait ... this could be a creative moment.. I think I'll just go home and come back tomorrow, if that's ok. I want to show my husband my new hair color, just for fun, and see if he thinks it was worth the money.

You can imagine, I'm sure, the reaction. He wasn't sure if he should tell me the truth or wait it out. Was I serious, did I not see how it really looked? Should he say something ... his eyes told me what he was really thinking, and for a change his mouth didn't. I couldn't stand it - I had to say something, it was just too funny watching him try so hard to be diplomatic. We had a wonderful laugh, and in the end, my hair was rescued and looked just fine with my laugh lines, as I walked

down the aisle with all those younger women and watched my brother get married.

P.S. In the 18 years since this episode, my hair has never known another dye job - it looks just fine to me, more and more reminiscent of my parents silvery locks.