

Like most people, I too, very clearly remember the day I was born. Actually I remember the moments leading up to the big launch. You see I awoke while still inside the womb.

As you might imagine, I was hopelessly annoyed with the surroundings. It was dark, dank and far too drab for my own taste. Nine months was a very long time to spend in such a desolate place. I began tapping my foot, "What's the hold up? Spread 'em! Let's go! Get me out of this monstrosity!"

To expedite labor I began doing the breaststroke, tagging the sac's membrane then flipping and pushing off the wall like a competitive swimmer. I continued to do so, until I saw a hint of daybreak beaming from a slit in the lower regions. And like any, soon to be Los Angeles actor worth his weight in Quinoa (KEEN WAH), I went FOR MY LIGHT.

SCREAMS of pain and joy and, no doubt, unfathomable regret filled the room. My mother was thrashing about in an absolute frenzy.

Stop! Please, Mother, you're giving me a headache! And even though I appreciated her flare for the dramatic, I couldn't take the histrionics any longer... Like the perfect pearl that I was, I pressed myself against the inner lips of that oyster and I POPPED myself out.

It's a boy! Exclaimed a nurse wearing an obnoxious smock covered with cartooned babies in diapers. Just as I turned to glare at her for yelling out the obvious, I see a hand coming for me. It's the doctor. Knowing his intention, I immediately slap him, then run up the length of my mother and slap her too.

A lovely calmness blankets the room. My mother pulls me close and kisses me. "He's so beautiful."

Of course I am!

"And, look at that red hair."

Wait what? Say again, Mother.

The nurse belts, "He's a GINGER!"

A GINGER? No! I panicked and tried to crawl back inside my mother's womb, surely a stillborn would be far more appreciated than a ginger! My mother held me tight, trying to calm my squirming self. The layer of mucous and after birth allowed me just enough lubricant to slip right out of her arms.

I had to see for this thing for myself. I headed for the metal tray that held the forceps and gauze in case of any birthing complications. I swiped the items to the floor, picked up the tray and... "Mother of God, I am a GINGER."

I suddenly knew how The Elephant Man felt as he stumbled across his hideousness in a merchant's window on the streets of London, or the pain Frankenstein felt while spotting his monstered image on the water's surface of that lake that he, oh so casually tossed that little Heidi chick into, or the revolt that surged through Quasimodo as he studied his crooked shadow against the great halls of Notre Dame.

What kind of an existence would this be for me? Do I dare stay within the walls of society and drudge through a life filled with villagers holding pitchforks, barking dogs and children screaming out in horror?

I'll dye it! Black, no, maybe brown, a chestnut color could be nice. Bring out my eyes. But, that's a lot of maintenance. Maybe I'll just shave it-

"I'll shave it."

The doctor leaned forward in his chair. "What was that?"

"My hair. I think I'll just shave it."

He nodded. "A lot of people do that. It's very cathartic." He paused, looking at me, as if waiting for me to catch up with him. "Are you alright?"

"Yeah. I'm good."

I realized that I had been daydreaming. My hair. My mother. Escaping my reality for the moment. This wasn't the same doctor I had just slapped. No. This doctor was my oncologist... We went about our appointment.

Not too far after my second round of Chemo I slid a comb through my locks. I was shocked to see the amount of hair clinging to the plastic teeth. It looked like I had taken off someone's handlebar mustache in one fell swoop. My hair was thinning. It was falling out.

Acceptance is recognizing a reality or action for what it is. It's abandoning resistance, submitting to and identifying what's actually in front of you and allowing it to be.

I picked up a pair of electric clippers that I'd haphazardly use on my dog Cecil when he would sit still long enough for me to groom him, and glided it over my head. I watched the clumps of hair fall onto my shoulders then roll, like tumble weeds, down my torso only to rest on the bathroom counter where they'd remain for an evening, me not having the strength of heart to dispose of them quite yet.

It occurred to me that I loved my hair. It was such a huge part of my identity. And because it was red it was unusual. It was unique. It was individual. It was mine. It should be celebrated, at the very least by me, and never shunned. Ever.

As my hair began to thicken and grow back, I adopted a shift in perspective. I would not take this second go around at ginger-hood for granted. I would appreciate it.

Embrace it. Maybe I am the lone ruby in a glorious mountain of diamonds. Maybe I am the perfectly imperfect scratch of crimson in a breath taking setting sun. Maybe I am the lone scarlet ibis amongst a glorious flock of wading birds along a shoreline. My hair set me apart. It made me stand out. And sometimes it even me stand up for myself.

Ginger. It's no longer a slur, a taunt, a dig, or a stab at my pasty-white-self. It is a part of who I am. Acceptance. I have red hair. I am a ginger.