

Hair Piece

Once upon a time, there was a young girl who had The World's Most Fashionable Hair.

It was long and silky and lustrous, and of a beautiful hue. It had a natural wave; but it was also easily curled or braided; and if properly cut it could even fall straight, straight as honesty.

She didn't really know how she'd achieved such exalted status – or, rather, how her hair had achieved it. She'd been entering, and winning, beauty pageants since before she could remember, thanks to her mother's efforts. (Her mother was a formidable dragoness, with absolute pitch for publicity. Her father was a noneity, and had been divorced off long ago.) The “most fashionable hair” riff had begun as gossip on the contest circuit. Then it became an inside joke; then a line shared with friendly reporters; then a catch phrase on talk shows and websites; then, somehow, the vote of an MTV / *Teen People* poll; then a registered trademark...by her fifteenth year, it had become her career, and her life. She was “seen” everywhere. Turn on *Entertainment Tonight*, open the pages of *YM*, and there she'd be: at a premiere, an awards ceremony, a fashion show, a video shoot with the latest boy band. People knew her famous hair better than they knew her name. “You know who I'm talkin' about – what's her name, the Fashionable Hair chick.”

She was never without an entourage. Her mother; a photographer, a dresser, a press agent; a flying squad of stylists who, between appearances, fussed and clucked over her – or, rather, over her hair, washing and brushing and curling and clipping. The dresser liked to put her in prom gowns: white fluffy frilly hoop-skirted things; but never tight or revealing, of course. For she was The Girl With The World's Most Fashionable Hair: young and innocent, fresh and wholesome; slightly dazed by her acclaim, but still good-humored.

She read a lot, on the long flights in first class. She'd get her copy of, for instance, *Teen People* – crinkled, scribbled on and clipped out from strategy sessions between her mother and the entourage – and be absorbed in stories of ordinary girls her own age doing ordinary things. They went to school. They dated boys. They worried about their looks. They lost and made friends. (She herself had never attended public school a day in her life.) She read also of girls her age doing more-than-ordinary things. Here was one who formed a gay-straight alliance in a conservative small-town school. Here was another who cleaned up a neglected park. Here was yet another who educated her peers about abusive relationships. Here was a group of girls who joined forces to close a crack house in their ghetto. Girls who actually petitioned their government for redress of grievances?? A girl who bore The World's Most Fashionable Hair couldn't possibly be involved in opinions.