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## I WAS AN UGLY CHILD

By Kelly Eng on May 04 2015 - Matters of the Heart

**You couldn't dress it up – I was an ugly child. Not mousey, not average and not even interesting-looking; just plain ugly.**

Among the many (many) things that didn't help were my fringe, braces and bad skin. Then there was my shapeless figure and my penchant for wearing my older brother's clothes. Finally, I sported a rash of crusty red eczema on my upper lip. As well as making me look as if I'd just had my first shave, it forced me to walk around the school yard with an industrial-sized tub of cortisone ointment. How chi chi.

My fringe was unfashionably heavy. These may be cute on 8-year-old girls and enigmatic French women, but it didn't work for me. Back then, all my peers had long since grown theirs out and were going for Gwyneth Paltrow's pixie cut from *Sliding Doors* or 'The Rachel'. I looked like I'd asked for 'The Quasimodo'.

In fact, I hadn't asked for an anything. My hair do was forced upon me by my stylist, my Mother, who took an avant garde approach, eschewing straight lines and sharp scissors. What she lacked in talent she made for up for in confidence, and she regularly inflicted on me the style that was known as 'The Helmet'.

When, one day at school, we had to name a celebrity that we thought we most looked like, someone helpfully proposed that Sandy from *Monkey Magic* – you know, that mild-mannered water monster and ex-cannibal with a massive fringe – was a perfect match for me.

Clearly Sandy's mother cut his hair too.

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Woe was me.

I also had a mouthful of braces. A family friend once cooed, “you’ll be glad you had them when all the boys start turning their head”. At that stage, all the boys were indeed turning their heads – away from me, and it was no wonder. I thought it would be cool to have coloured braces and my preferred colour scheme was all-black with one green brace on my front tooth. When I grinned, it looked like some Dickensian gingivitis victim was baring his teeth for affection.

For an extra high school handicap, I also had pimples. Not the kind in the *Clean and Clear* ads where a pretty brunette frets over a miniscule stunt dot on her chin. No, I had a positive milky way of pimples sprinkled hither and yon over my face. Back in my day, I couldn’t procure *Roaccutane* on Silk Road. The only thing I could do was bathe in tea tree oil and pray.

In English class we watched *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. As those ill-fated girls scrambled up the mysterious edifice, Miranda’s angelic face flashed up on the screen. The viewing prompted an intellectual conversation about who among us could have made it as extras in the film. Several of the porcelain-skinned beauties among the class were suggested and feigned modesty; I sat lumpen and unheralded in the corner with the Greek girl and my tub of ointment. Things would have been oh-so different had we been watching *Fraggle Rock*.

One day, it all got spectacularly worse.

I grew a monumental pimple on my nose. It was everything an already awkward *Hanging Rock High* outcast didn’t need in the centre of her face. Volcanic and enraged, it fed through a complex root system that seemed to drain me of essential vitamins.

Then things got worse again. Another one grew beside it. Not quite as statuesque as its neighbour, but grosser, angrier, more taut. And then a fresh hell: they merged. The result was one giant pulsating mother f\*cker of a gargoyle on my hooter.

Woe was me.

The Pimples haunted me. Helpless against the urge to focus on them, I stumbled around cross-eyed. My brother called me Rudolph, which at least made a change from Sandy. When conversing, nobody – student or teacher – could look me in the eye because The Pimples were hypnotic; they practically had hair (better than mine), teeth (straighter than mine) and a pulse.

I considered amputation, but the whole nose (and perhaps part of my eye) would have had to come off. I thought of becoming a Muslim or a beekeeper or living at



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After a month of cohabiting, The Pimples upped and left, moving into their own inner-city apartment, leaving only a massive crater. Thereafter, I limped my way to adulthood, dragging my self-esteem behind me.

Time is the great healer of all wounds.

*Two decades on, the author is pleased to report that she has blossomed into a stunningly plain-looking woman. She still struggles with her fringe.*



Kelly Eng is a freelance writer who blogs about haunted houses, her bum and her imaginary dog, Dennis Wongbert, at [www.kellyeng.net](http://www.kellyeng.net).

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I've always found it fascinating to listen to boys...

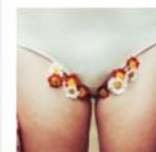
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Eva  
May 5, 2015

Reply

Oh how wonderful and beautifully written this is!!  
 I too was a victim of the mother-fringe. Wonky and thick and completely offset by the cruelty of a "boy" short back and sides cut when she discovered nits one time. School photo cringe session!!  
 I didn't have too many pimples but I was around 30 kilos heavier than my school mates so I hear you. I hear you loud n clear.  
 And look how beautiful we are now!  
 Rocking piece.  
 Thank you x



Kelly E  
May 5, 2015

Reply

Thanks Tjala! And thanks Eva for the lovely feedback 😊  
 When I was 19 I put on about 11 kilograms (my 16 meal a day habit didn't help), but thankfully everything seems to be under control...for the moment! Go us. xxxx

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