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Feature

September
Theme

Prep Time

Transitions

by Debbie Fox

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Introductory

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When I was a teenager, I wanted to be Judy Jetson and live in the future. More importantly, I wanted to step into a space age shower room and push a few buttons. Beep...bzzzzzz...swoosh. At warp speed, I'd be transformed into a sanitized, smartly attired, ready-for-fun girl. I simply hated the process of bathing, grooming and dressing because it was so time consuming. I know you're probably thinking I was a slob, skipping daily hygiene, but I wasn't. During the cleanup drudgery, I daydreamed, envisioned a future where bathing and dressing were performed in seconds, freeing me for more important things. Well, the future has arrived, and I still don't have my Jetson shower. The grooming process continues to irritate me, now even more so because I am older.

The older I get, the longer it takes me to get ready for a day or evening out. It's probably not worth the effort, although someone recently told me I looked like Meg Ryan. I grinned all day. Like many of the over fifty crowd, I'm trying to stave off aging, without getting too radical about it. A friend called me at 11:30 the other day, "Want to go to lunch?" Still in my workout clothes and without a shower, I said, "I'm kind of busy right now." I didn't want to explain that I needed at least two hours of prep time before going out in public. She begged, so I agreed.

I hurried into the shower, but the awkwardness of my once functional, articulating joints hindered me. Opening the shampoo bottle took effort. Flip top lid? Yeah, right. I needed divine intervention to open it. When I finally managed to squeeze out a drop of shampoo and close the lid, you could bet I wouldn't be thinking about that second wash the directions suggested. I had to save my strength to open the bottle of conditioner. After the hair washing/conditioning chore, I was shocked to see, even with my poor eyesight, the amount of hair on the shower floor. What did they put in that shampoo? A depilatory? Maybe I should have tried it on my legs.

As the water carried away the evidence of my balding, I turned to the task of shaving my legs. I wondered why leg hair didn't fall out like scalp hair. With my varicose veins, the blood supply surely wouldn't encourage hair growth. But it did, so I lathered up one leg, thankful I could pry off the top of the

shaving cream can. Clinging with one hand on the grab bar (smart that I had that installed), I prayed I wouldn't fall and break a hip. I stretched to reach the back of my leg with a razor that should have had an extension handle. When had my arm length shrunk? I finished with the razor, blindly shaving my underarms while taking care not to nick the skin drooping in the vicinity.

Then, feeling adventurous and avoiding the verbena soap concoction that had me wheezing the last time I used it, I drizzled a dab of vanilla bean gel on a scratchy bath sponge. Suddenly hungry, I scoured my body with what little energy I had left. After rinsing, I went the extra mile like a winded marathoner and smeared on the in-shower body lotion, rinsed again, and at last stepped into a towel. I mentally tabulated the gallons of water I had used.

Next, I slathered on face creams and two cups of body lotion, massaged mousse into my thinning hair, and spritzed on a hopefully alluring body scent. While all the goo was drying, I squinted into the magnifying mirror and tweezed eyebrows that looked as if they'd been fertilized – at least half of each brow. The other half, the half that should arch nicely and trail into a thin line, had disappeared. Who stole two halves of my eyebrows? I pulled on my glasses to make sure. Yep, they were gone, vanished when I wasn't looking. Luckily, I had an eyebrow pencil. With an unsteady hand, I drew the missing halves, clearly aware the color was slightly off, but what was a girl to do?

While I was applying my makeup, I noticed, to my horror, prickly hairs poking from my nostrils. My missing eyebrows! How did they get there? I rummaged out a scissors and hacked away. So far, the mustache I knew many women developed when their hormones fizzled had not appeared on my upper lip. But I'm sure one day it will sprout, looking as if it wants to be in a mustache-growing contest.

I dried my hair, my arms heavy and legs bowed, ready for a sit-down, but first I coated my lungs with a couple ounces of hairspray while I destroyed the ozone. With pride, I froze my hair into the messy Meg Ryan style popular in the '80s. After twenty minutes of fussing, I looked as if I hadn't spent a minute on my hair. If only they knew.

Finally, I could dress. Of course that took another twenty minutes to determine which outfit best disguised the line where waistline and breasts merged. I allowed five extra minutes for breast adjustment, which was like hoisting Jell-O into my new Wonderbra. I fumbled with buttons and zippers and wiggled into my clothes, snug despite my half-hearted daily exercise routine. I decorated myself with jewels, okay so they're fake, smeared on some lipstick, and I was ready to head out the door, luckily before my lunch date turned into a dinner engagement.

Prep time – two hours and twenty-eight minutes.

As I was leaving, I glanced at a bag of cookies on the table and laughed. No need for Jetson technology. I had found those easy to open in just a fraction of a second. ••

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