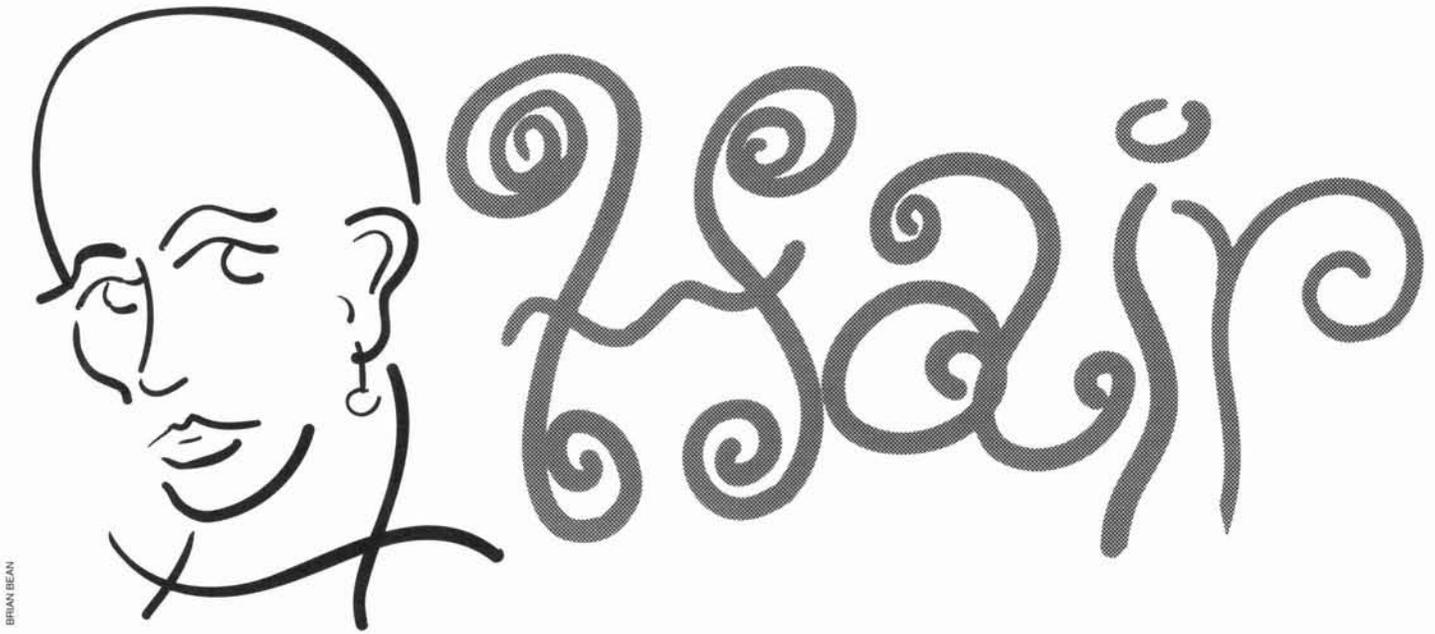


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WINGS

By Ann Edwards Cannon



BRIAN BEAN

*"What's hair, after all? A vanity. A nuisance.
A minor ransom for staying alive."*

YOU GO TO BED AT NIGHT, AND YOU DREAM about hair. You dream about all kinds of hair—big hair, bad hair, buffalo hair, fab hair, glam hair, shake-it-down-your-back hair. Hair, hair, everywhere hair!

You dream about Hair throughout the Ages. Maid Marion hair tucked chastely beneath wimples. Marie Antoinette Hair docked like pontoons on top of regal heads. Gibson Girl Hair swirled around elegant brows. Flapper Hair skimming square jaws.

You dream about Important Television Hair. Lucy Hair and a fizz of red bangs. Annette Hair and a pair of ears. I Dream of Jeannie Hair and a bobbing ponytail. Cher Hair and a part down the middle. Farrah Hair and the forgotten desires of your seventies' heart.

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You dream about Professional Hair and how By Their Hair Ye Shall Know Them—Female Lawyer Hair, Texas Drill Team Hair, Starlet Hair, Lunchroom Lady Hair, Sales Clerk Hair heavy on the mousse.

Occasionally, you dream about International Hair—African corn rows, Scandinavian braids, Mediterranean hennas—but not often, because, quite frankly, these dreams are never very interesting.

Once you even had a dream about Politically Correct Hair which only made sense while you were having it.

At other times, you dream about the Hair of Your Youth. You dream about your mother's hair when you were really small. You dream about how she went to the beauty parlor on the corner by the grocery store every Saturday morning where ladies in pink coats coaxed her lovely dark hair into a high French twist. On Saturday nights, before she went to bed, she took extra care to wrap her hair with tissue so it would be per-

fection for church on Sunday mornings. When she would awake, your father would tease and say, well I'll be damned everybody if it isn't Elsa Lancaster rising from the table.

You dream about the competently engineered hair of the ladies in the ward, and you still see them in your sleep, walking up and down church halls as comforting as Sisters of Mercy, bouncing babies on their hips.

You dream about the hair of the teenage girls named Patsy and Debbie and Vickie who used to babysit you. They liked to tease and rat and spray, and sometimes they would even practice on you. Then they told you secrets about boys.

Later, when you were in high school, you and your friends loved Sun-in, and you dream about sitting around a pool all summer, looking just oh-so slightly bored while saturating your wet hair with color possibilities and rubbing baby oil down and up your young girl legs, knowing but pretending not to care that the boys were watching.

You dream about those boys, too. You dream about the ones you kissed and never kissed and you see yourself now kissing them all with a rush of passion, giving them equal time, running your hands across their taut salty skin and through their heads of hair.

And you dream of Baby Hair—your newborn nieces with their thick black mats of hair, your own son with his breath of blond. How can this be, you and your brother love to ask each other over and over, as though his wife and your husband don't figure in the equation. Cousins and yet nothing alike—male and female, dark and light. It doesn't matter. You pick them all up and put their warm, fragrant heads against the skin of your face over and over.

When you wake after a nightfull of dreams like these, you are surprised to see your own reflection in the mirror. Still. After all these weeks. You just don't look like yourself with your hair leaving,

You knew it would happen, of course. They told you it was one of the side-effects of the treatment, just like the ceaseless, rolling nausea. So you prepared yourself intellectually. What's hair, after all? A vanity. A nuisance. Something to obsess about when you're bored. Something to keep your head warm when it's cold outside. A minor ransom for staying alive.

Still, losing it has been harder than you thought.

Mostly you just go on, but on those days when you think you cannot, you remember the One Dream. You don't try to remember it—the memory comes unbidden, comes back like a gift.

In this One Dream, you see yourself sleeping on your back—queen position—in the middle of a large, white, feather bed filled with white feather pillows and a white feather quilt. Your glossy dark hair is thick and long, much thicker and longer than it ever was in real life, and it fans out from the sides of your head so that it surrounds you, trembling, quivering, hovering around your serene, sleeping face.

Like wings.

So there it is. Such an odd image, really, but in ways unexpected and inexplicable, it stays sweetly with you, and you take comfort in it. 



SUMMER RERUNS

July, and we're at it again,
 spinning another rerun
 of '50s summers
 spent together—mom, dad
 and the kids cot to cot
 in the pine-paneled loft—
 waking to lake-chilled mornings,
 kettles steaming to heat the cold
 running water for old-timey baths,
 and at night the whole spilling
 milky way, stars winking
 like fireflies, that close,
 as it all was back then,
 just roughing it, sloughing off
 winter's careful spaces.

Thirteen summers and I still play
 those memories I married into,
 all that iterated glow—
 the hand-cranked ice cream,
 sweet corn and tomatoes
 field warm from the farmer
 right down the road—
 and oh the gift to be simple.

No one here to know my own
 slow summers, the three rooms
 that held the four of us
 that close those city nights
 the window fan rattled
 slack air till sleep gave out
 and everyone in that old building
 dragged their dreams down
 to the front stoop, all their somedays
 whispering in the fizz of the street
 lamp's flickering circle—
 the lovely houses,
 their rooms long enough to move in,
 and the smooth porcelain baths,
 hot and cold flowing flawlessly together.

—CAROL TUFTS