

## Hair Die

By Vicki Sala

On Thursday evening, George Geoffrey looked worriedly into the mirror which hung listlessly in the hallway. It'd never had a pleasant view to reflect. He had watched the man staring back at him with increasing anxiety over the past few years. He was scrawny, bald and very short. His clothes were beige, man-made fibre affairs, bought for him at the charity shop. Beige cardigan, beige socks inside beige, buckled-up sandals and beige slacks, which were always just a little too short. He drove an old, square, beige Rover to the tax office where he was a silent man who didn't mix well with others. His entire life was drab and beige. A non-descript, dull, pain-ridden life where his personality, confidence and sense of fun had slowly and torturously been drained from him. Nothing the mirror showed seemed to fit him. Not his clothes, not his life, and certainly not his character.

Joan Geoffrey had been the cause of his troubles. Constantly laughing at him; humiliating him in front of his few friends and family until the pressure in his head had made him explode. He hadn't meant to, but on Thursday night, while she was telling him what a failure he was for not washing up properly, he felt himself expanding. His lungs filled with air and his arms with fury until his feeling of rage had grown so large it seemed to be bigger than his body could contain. The heavy pan was shaking as his fist gripped the handle a little too tightly.

'... and I told you NOT to stack the bowls on the left, you fucking stupid little man,' ranted Joan Geoffery in his right ear, the stench of her cheap perfume, lacquer and cigarettes overpowering his ability to take a clean breath, 'You are a fucking embarrassment. Jeanie found lipstick on her teacup last Thursday because you are even shit at washing up. For fuck's sake, you don't earn enough for me to have a fucking cleaner...' Her voice was getting shriller and louder. George Geoffery could imagine her wizened little mouth forming the words between deep drags on her cigarette, her bright pink lipstick having bled into the cracks and wrinkles around her lips. He mustn't look at her. He tried with all his might to quash the enormous anger rising in him. He didn't understand the feeling, and wondered how he still fit in the room. I mustn't turn around, I mustn't turn around he repeated over and over, waiting for her blows to start raining down on him in the usual pattern of violence.

'Not only are you completely useless, you are fat and ugly,' She raged on, '...and a faggot. I bought you a hat to wear outside of the house because of your pathetic baldness. You couldn't even keep your hair on your head you are so shit at everything, but would you wear it? No. I bet you were too worried the

nice pretty boys at work would laugh at you...’ What a shame those will be her last words thought George Geoffrey, disappointed and saddened by her to the last. She can’t even talk in an appropriate manner at such a monumental moment, and with that, he felt himself turn and launch the pan furiously towards her face, as if his body had taken on a life of its own, and was pulling his soul along, working to end his misery where his mind had not been able.

‘YOU SHUT UP.’ He screamed as he flew towards her ‘SHUT UP, SHUT UP, SHUT UP...’ He hit her face over and over again with the pan. All he could think was to break her mouth; to stop it speaking and swearing and hollering. To stop the puckered evil hole from ever hurting him again. As she fell to the floor, he watched the pink lipstick ooze and mix with her red blood as the rest of her body jolted with every blow, until George Geoffery felt his arms begin to ache, and he gradually stopped himself from attacking her.

‘Now you fucking lay there, hurting.’ He whispered through gritted teeth into her mangled face ‘You lay there until you learn to be a good girl, and not be rude to others, or an embarrassment to me.’ It was the first and last time he had ever stood up to Joan Geoffery, and it felt good. It felt like freedom. He was even sure he must look different, and made a mental note to check the mirror in the hallway sometime soon.

The body lay on the floor for the whole night and the next day. Only after watching Coronation Street on Friday evening did George decide he really should do something before the body started to smell, or his window of opportunity would be lost. He had been thinking about how to dispose of a corpse and the plan to rid himself of the body hadn’t been hard to come up with. On his way home from work on Friday afternoon, he caught a glimpse of a freshly dug grave in the secluded churchyard he often drove past and the idea formed all by itself. He would remove the earth, throw the corpse on top of the other person’s coffin, and then replace the earth. The crime would go completely unnoticed and without a hitch. He felt only the slightest pang of guilt at the thought of forcing an unknown innocent dead person to share their grave with such a monster. However, the guilt was gone in the twinkle of an eye. He did think it would be such a terrible shame to dispose of everything though, especially when there was a part of it he wanted so much for himself. Although she had been old, Joan Geoffrey had had the most beautiful hair. Dyed a colour George called ‘Prostitute Blonde’ it was beautiful, glossy and long. It was the only part of her, inside or out, George had ever really liked. He was sure with a little tender care and a sweet smelling shampoo he could get rid of the smell of tobacco and the clumps of blood. It would come in very handy, not to mention save him a little bit of money.

He set about the mashed up face with a scalpel he had in his modelling kit. Who would ever have thought I'd get to use it on more than army miniatures? He thought to himself, amused. He sliced carefully around the hairline, tugging at the hair to pull the scalp away from the skull, gently, so as not to tear it. Cut and pull, cut and pull, cut and pull. It was tricky turning the fat body over to slice around the nape of the neck, but he was so focused and determined that he got it all done in a very short time. Within the hour, the skin had been washed on the inside, the hair washed on the outside and the whole thing was hung on the radiator to dry. This is all a little strange, thought George, musing on how the oddness came from how un-odd it all felt to him. Perhaps I should feel a little remorse, or at least a bit sickened? But it all feels so wonderful, there seems to be no room left for anything else. And he gave it no more thought.

George felt entirely satisfied, and when he went to drag Joan Geoffrey's body to the beige Rover that same night, he was also satisfied that he had removed the only nice part about her and separated the sweet from the sick. The hair had never fitted her properly. She was too demonic to have ever had anything pretty attached to her. The hair was as free as he was now, and together they would step into the world with a new lease of life.

George spent the next week making a list, where everything came under the heading 'Change' and set about changing every single part of his life, from his socks to his car.

Exactly one month after Joan Geoffrey's murder, Georgette Geoffery was pampering herself in the bathroom. She had shaved, plucked her eyebrows and moisturised herself from head to toe. She then spent hours in her bedroom, drenching herself in her favourite perfume, applying her make up with precision to hide all her flaws and accentuate her best features. She had slipped into her satin lingerie, taking great care not to ladder her stockings, and slid her silk and sequin dress over her head. Georgette stepped out of her bedroom with confidence, to admire herself in the full length mirror in the hallway and as she turned and twirled, her dress caught the light. It sparkled delicately, and so did she. The mirror had never been so blessed. Bright red suited her pale skin so well, and the high stiletto heels on her shoes gave her a lift and a spring in her step. Practice had indeed made perfect and she mastered the art of walking so tall that she looked like a swan gliding across water. The crowning glory however, was her hair, flowing, almost shimmering as it twirled around with her, fanning out all around her as they flew through the air together. She felt on top of the world, and tonight, the rest of the world could witness her butterfly moment as she emerged from a dark and ugly cocoon, as bright and beautiful as she could ever have wished to be.

As she wrapped herself in a thick fur stole, picking her car key up off the hook by the door, Georgette

smiled at the red lump of plastic with the prancing horse logo. Years of secret savings had been spent in just a few weeks, and she was proud to think her own hard-earned money had bought the feeling of glamour which she felt as she swept across her driveway and into her car. She was determined to impress and bathe in her success as others admired her. Who knows? She thought. Maybe I'll even get lucky! It's been a wonderful, wonderful month, after all.

Jaws dropped, heads turned and whispers echoed from everywhere as she floated through the club.

'Who is she?'

'Wow! I want a piece of that!'

'Hey, Baby, can I sleep in your bed tonight?'

Georgette just kept walking in a gentle, elegant manner, focusing on her swelling confidence, and the bar at the far end of the dimly-lit room.

'Mojito, please.' She said simply, with a nod of her head and a sweet smile.

'Si Senorita.' answered the barman with his drawling Latino accent 'I have not seen you here before, and I know I would remember a beautiful face like yours. Are you here on business?'

'No. Not business. Purely pleasure. Maybe you'd like to help?' She raised a questioning eyebrow. The barman smiled a crooked smile, and danger flashed in his eyes.

'I think your hair would look pretty on my pillow, would that help?' he asked. Georgette threw her head back and laughed as she replied.

'I get my hair from my mother. It is rather beautiful isn't it?'

'I adore it.' He whispered in her ear, gently twirling a lock of it between his fingers. 'So will you come back to my apartment?' He was exactly the kind of lover who would suit, thought Georgette. A tall, dark, handsome man, rapid on the draw, who would love her then leave her. Perfect.

'As long as you drive me all the way' she mouthed as she draped herself provocatively across the bar, dangling her keys next to her glossy painted lips, preparing to cross the very last change from her list.