

## On Cutting your Hair

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When it rains, I can feel it on my neck, sticky and uncomfortable. When it is hot, the little strands of hair at the back of my neck annoy me. The yearning for short hair is present, strong in me - but what will it be this time? Just a trim, only the final inches? Or will it be an unexpected, drastic change?

I have been wanting to cut my hair for at least a year. Nevertheless, I never get to do it. 'Maybe next summer', I say to myself. But summer comes and goes, I use up and loose packs and packs of invisible pins, yet still my hair is long. 'Maybe in winter, then', and I have the courage but I lack the guts to confront a hard winter without the fine protection of my hair wrapped around my neck, not unlike a scarf. Maybe, maybe, maybe. When am I going to do it? Why can I not bring myself to do it?

My hair and I go a long way back - I have dyed it, cut it, shaved it completely, also straightened it to the utmost so as not to suffer from the frizz disease - but it is time for a change. I can feel it every day when I stare at my reflection in the mirror. The desire to grab the scissors and chop it all off is strong - and not far from a prickling sensation at the back of my mind. I see one girl in a million, also multitudes of boys, old ladies and gentlemen wearing short, manageable hair and - I want to say goodbye to my hairdo of the moment. But there is something holding me back, and I cannot pinpoint what it is.

Perhaps, it is because people always pay more attention to women rather than men. How many times has a man crossed our path, effortlessly carrying with them their overgrown, flourishing manes, some even tying them up into a quick and never-failing bun - all of these real-life, modern Thor cosplayers wander around the city, and no one bats an eyelash. Why should they? Ever since ancient times, the longer a man let his hair grow, the greater he deemed to be. The lengthier and more elaborate their hairdos were, the greater respect they would receive. Not only in real life, but in fiction too: characters such as Legolas from *Lord of the Rings*, Aquaman from the DC universe, and the God of Thunder from Marvel's cinematic works. *Game of Thrones* could also count as an example, too: Khal Drogo, Khal of the Dothraki tribe (this could be translated as 'king of a tribe'), he was characterized for carrying his mane in a braid so long it could outdo Rapunzel's: the long hair was a symbol of their strength, it was the way they chose to display the fact that they had not yet been defeated in combat yet, it showed off how worthy they were of being aKhal.

So, if a man decides to (sort-of) 'defy' the so-called gender stereotypes, and not bother with cutting his hair for at least a year, more than one person would praise that attitude, going so far as qualifying it as an 'act of bravery', and what for? For letting his hair reach his shoulders for the very first time since they were children? I grew my hair out for years, spent countless amounts of money on hairbands, hair ties and pins, yet no one suggested that I was 'brave'.

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But, oh, how the tables turn when it is a woman who decides to opt for a haircut above her collarbone, or (God forbid!) channel a pixie-haired Audrey Hepburn. No high praise for them, no badges of honour, no little golden stars beside their names. And why not? Aren't they worthy of admiration? Don't they deserve a bit of credit too, for having the guts to chop it all off without looking back? I am a hundred percent sure they deserve it. For months, I have been gathering the strength to take the final step. (Yet I still have not done it.)

I did it once, though, a few years back – I went to the hairdresser's and came out with a head full of short hair, resembling a small kiwi. I cannot shake from my mind how liberating, how cathartic it feels to hear the faint *'snip snipping'* with every strand that glides to the floor. The relief I felt that time cannot be measured, cannot be compared. To get rid of your hair feels powerful, not unlike a fresh start: so, I understand where the logic of 'new hair, new me' comes from.

It is easy to describe the feeling and talk about it, but it is not so easy to put it into practice. When you cut your hair, whether you do it for charity, for the sake of your personal image, or for outside forces (e.g.: you *need* to, for medical reasons), a haircut will always come hand in hand with questions, doubts, judgemental thoughts. From your sexual orientation, to your gender, to your mental sanity, people will always talk about it, make it their business. Senior ladies will stare at you, clueless teenagers will mistake you for a man, and even your parents will make a feeble attempt to confront you about an identity crisis – what matters the most is that you are confident in your choices, and that you have not denied yourself something just because you are afraid people will talk – they do little else nowadays.

After all, hair is only an ephemeral part of ourselves, a tiny, visible glimpse of our personality. You are not defined by the length or by what colour you decide to dye your hair, that is certain. Furthermore, you can find the inspiration, the empowerment required to go against the scissors wherever you choose to focus your attention: badass, selfless warrior women being screened on TV, androgynous models portrayed in advertisements and walking down the runways, and even the girl that catches the bus at 6 a.m. with you every morning, with her head wrapped in a scarf to fight the cold (she wears short hair so smoothly, you cannot help but being a little envious of her).

According to the Old Testament, Delilah insisted on cutting Samson's luscious mane, in order to strip him of his physical strength – or so the thought. Now, if we adapt their situation to our current era, when all that matters nowadays is aesthetics – even on a daily basis – would it be too far fetched to affirm that Delilah was not so off track in thinking some of our inner strength is to be found in our hair? What they once regarded as a source of strength or power, is nowadays part of our letter of introduction. Whether you dye your hair a vibrant purple or grow it down to your waist – it is a choice, it is there for everybody to see. It is always broadcasting a part of your personality. We ought to stick by our decisions regarding hair style, and whatever changes come our way. After all, hair is always growing, changing,

adapting – and so are we. And a bad haircut is only temporary – should worse come to worst, there is nothing an affordable, quality wig cannot fix.