

Leonard Stein was extremely nervous, as he fidgeted in his chair. Sitting in the waiting room of a surgeon's office is bad enough, yet it's the reason which brought Leonard to this point that gives him the most apprehension. Leonard Stein was born in the same manner as anyone else you'll meet. Except for one thing. His hair was naturally pink. So help me, from the day he popped out of his screaming mother to this very moment in the doctor's office, his hair was pink from root to tip. It wasn't red or white or any variation within. No, Leonard Stein had been cursed with flamboyantly glaring hot-pink hair, and that is why he was now waiting in a surgeon's office.

Growing up as a young boy with bright pink hair is an even more difficult than you might imagine. Leonard aspired to run around playing football, but he had pink hair. He dreamed of feeling the slimy skin of a frog as he played by the creek, but he had pink hair. He longed for someone to be his buddy, his pal – his friend. But he had pink hair. If you are able to recall your own childhood, I urge you to remember, in as much detail as you can, the cruelty with which children can treat someone who is different. No self-respecting young boy wanted to be seen with the one with the pink hair, 'starburst' (after the brightly colored candy) they called him. Leonard also had to endure comparisons to bubble gum, neon signs, Barbie, and a plethora of other names that didn't even make sense. But, cruelty never has to make sense, as long as what is said is hurtful. And, Leonard did hurt.

Leonard's parents were as ashamed of his hair as he was. First, his father. What sort of man can be proud of a son who's masculine abilities are cut short by a pink head of hair? Second, his mother. What kind of freak woman must she be to give birth to a pink haired son? These questions, and more, Leonard's parents constantly asked themselves – always more concerned about their own well being than their son's. They had tried dying Leonard's hair many times, yet nothing was strong enough to overpower the natural pink hue. Colored lotions and exotic dyes were brought in from every corner and crevice of the planet, but it was always to no avail. No matter how hard his parents tried to cover it up, the luminosity of Leonard's hair always shone through. Even the thickest hats crammed over the young boy's head seemed to glow from within. One day, when Leonard was only 7, his mother shaved his head completely bald. In her desperation to save some face amongst the public, she thought it more acceptable that Leonard appear to be undergoing cancer treatment than to be a freak of nature. Yet, to his mother's chagrin, Leonard had not only been burdened with pink hair, but within an hour of shaving, bright specks of stubble began to appear. Leonard's hair was so strong, that after being shaved clean, it grew faster than normal to appear, almost as if to spite Leonard's parents. Which, his father concluded, was the fault of Leonard himself. His parents slowly began to ignore Leonard as their son, and by the time he entered high school, he was practically living alone.

Leonard had lived his life without friends, without love, and without any sense of what it is like to live a normal life. So, when he heard of Dr. Spantz's new Medical Hair Replacement Surgery™, he was the first in line to get the procedure. Leonard was now 25, and after a lifetime of trouble, he was finally going to be rid of the bright nuisance that plagued his head. Dr. Spantz made gregarious guarantees of success for Leonard; so

much so, that Leonard had almost forgotten that he ever had pink hair to begin with. That was, until Leonard saw the beautiful nurse/receptionist at the doctor's office, which reminded him immediately of his bright pink hair, and he became nervously self-conscious. He glanced at her sitting behind her panel desk, and brought to mind every female that had ever rejected him in his entire life. She smiled, though, when she saw Leonard, and asked him to fill out some paperwork as he waited for his life-changing surgery. Upon completion of the eerily long forms (half of which were made up of 'in cause of death or serious injury waivers'), the nurse/receptionist informed Leonard that he would be admitted in just a moment and to take a seat.

And this is where we came into the story. Beads of sweat dripped from Leonard's nervous forehead – picking up the shine from his bright hair as they dripped down. He was a nervous wreck – half embarrassment and half jubilation at his forthcoming freedom. After what had seemed like an hour, though it was only a few minutes, the nurse/receptionist walked through the door and called Leonard to follow her to the back rooms. As was usually the case for Leonard, he walked with a downward gaze – where he saw something he didn't believe. The nurse/receptionist, a beautiful and perfect looking woman, had horse's legs. This wasn't an insult. She literally had two legs, covered in hair, with hooves instead of feet. Leonard looked up, as he followed her along a hallway, and realized that a woman with horse's legs must completely understand the difficult life of a man with pink hair. He slowed down his steps, until he was standing still. The nurse/receptionist did not notice, until Leonard spoke.

"You have horse's legs."

The nurse/receptionist turned around, ready to be angry, but after seeing the genuine smile on Leonard's face, her reaction softened to return his smile.

"And you have pink hair," she grinned. "I know it's not my place to say so, but when I saw you – I kind of hoped that you weren't getting this procedure done."

"Why not?" Leonard stepped closer, and looked the nurse/receptionist straight in the eyes. She had beautiful eyes.

"Because – I think you're handsome. And, besides...us freaks belong together."

Leonard never had his corrective surgery. The nurse/receptionist was promptly fired from her job by Dr. Spantz for her losing him business, but she didn't mind. She became a wife/friend to Leonard, which was a more fulfilling job anyways. She is now 5 months pregnant, and regardless of whether the child is boy or girl, blonde or glowing green haired, short or tall, smart or stupid, ugly or beautiful, Leonard and his wife will love that child with all of their hearts, because nobody deserves to be outcast for how they look.

Except for redheads. *Nobody* likes a redhead.