

Just a Trim

Hairdressers are not my friends. Oh they pretend to be. Every time I walk into a salon with an overgrown mane and highlights starting half way down my head there is an audible gasp and dollar signs flash behind the pupils of the stylists. They try not to salivate as I list what needs doing. Supposedly, a short to mid-length hair style should be trimmed every six weeks or so. My locks are subject to this treatment every 3-4 months, whenever I can squeeze it in to my packed schedule.

I still don't understand why the word trim is not in the hairdresser's lexicon. I think that we all agree that "Just a trim" means just that – one or two centimetres off the bottom of the hairline to tidy things up and farewell split ends. Why then, does every hairdresser see this as an opportunity to halve the length of the hair on offer? This is why I go to salons so infrequently – I have to wait for my hair to grow back before I have enough to give it another attempt.

I am not brand loyal to salons, rarely returning to the same one consistently. The few that do a good job the first time seem to take my custom for granted if I return and do a terrible second attempt, so I see no point in being a regular. Instead I am a salon whore, visiting multiple establishments on a whim wherever I happen to be, in the hopes that the stylist will make a special effort to retain a new customer. After years of doing this, I can categorically say that there is no country or city that this works

in, but I live in hope.

My hairdressing experiences tend to go much the same way every time. I show up for my appointment and am gently guided to an incredibly uncomfortable chair so high that my feet can't touch the ground. I am wrapped in a gown made of the same material as shower curtains that has the magical ability to adhere to bare skin. Despite the collar being uncomfortably tight, there is always a trickle of liquid that makes its way down my neck and under the gown at some point in the proceedings, tickling on its way. The lighting is harsh and unforgiving, so the mirrors reflect every blemish. I go with my hair unwashed as I see no point in doing the hairdresser's work for them, so my hair is lank and limp.

The ensuing state of depression is when the stylist pounces. I know there is little point in trying to explain what I want. I often show pictures and seek feedback, in the process of negotiation. The best cut I ever had was in Dubai. The gay Lebanese hairdresser looked at the picture of my preferred cut, frowned, and then pulled all of my hair over to one side, suggesting a heavy side fringe.

"No thanks" I said. I have never seen such a reactionary pout. He flounced off, tut-tutting as he went and came back with a picture of the style he wanted to do. Intimidated I agreed. As I walked out of the salon I called the friends I was supposed to be meeting for dinner to cancel. I just could not walk into a public place looking like I had a dead cat on my head. I had so much

product in my hair that I was flammable. It took three washes to feel like it was my hair, but it turned out that for at least two weeks I had a great looking hairstyle. That is a record.

I selected the salon for my most recent haircut by purchasing a discount voucher. It was at the other end of London, but I saved around 100 pounds with the voucher. 100 pounds! Why is it that women's cuts cost hundreds, while men can get the work done for a tenner? Admittedly it was for highlights, a cut, a conditioning treatment and a blow dry, but my budget maxes out at 50. As I waited in my high chair, I looked at the stylists. The head stylist was a stereotypically gay man, neat and presentable. My stylist was Brazilian, with scruffy dyed blonde hair pulled back unevenly into two plaits, topped with a pink ribbon. Really? She is responsible for my new do? Oh dear. The last in the trio was a French man who had hobbit ears. I kid you not. In India I have seen men with hair growing from their earholes, but this guy had a layer of carpet growing along the rim of either ear. It was mesmerising...and baffling. Why would you not wax, or at least give the unruly bush a trim? Surely a stylist has a responsibility to look good? This bunch did not engender faith.

I went through the traditional negotiations and then handed over the reins to Rosa to do as she wished because let's face it, she was going to anyway. My stomach sank a little as I smelt industrial grade peroxide. Subtle

highlights were unlikely to be the outcome of this experience. My mum called just as I sat at the basin but Rosa was not deterred. Risking possible electrocution, she started washing while I tried to keep my conversation brief. A snip here and a snip there, an expose of Rosa's love life, puffs of scalding air from the hairdryer, and we were done.

It will not come as a surprise to learn that my new hair style looked nothing like any of the options we had agreed on. I am also now a honey blonde. It will grow, and I will try again in a few months once my roots start looking like a median strip. Until then I will use my hairdryer every morning, sigh a little, then ruffle my locks and go for the windswept look.

